



L.A. bans alcohol ads on bus shelters, city property

by John Schreiber

January 20, 2015



Los Angeles City Council Chamber

Photo by John Schreiber

The Los Angeles City Council voted Tuesday to ban alcohol advertising on bus shelters, benches and other city-owned property.

The measure's supporters said the prohibition will curb the alcohol industry's ability to entice young people into alcohol consumption.

Councilman Paul Koretz, one of the authors of the ban, said the city joins "Philadelphia and San Francisco in striking a blow against the presence of alcohol ads on city-owned and controlled property, including bus shelters used daily by young people in our city."

The council voted 12-0 to approve the ordinance, which will now go to the mayor's desk. If signed, the measure would make Los Angeles the most populous city in the country to prohibit alcohol advertising on city property, according to supporters.

Councilman Jose Huizar, an early backer of the ban when it was first suggested in 2011 by then-Councilmen Richard Alarcon, Tony Cardenas and Bill Rosendahl, said the ban "is a long time coming."

Low-income and working communities in his council district — such as Boyle Heights, El Sereno and Highland Park — are "disproportionately" exposed to alcohol advertising, Huizar said.

Those are “proud communities that are improving, and these types of advertisements are not the kind of messages we want to send to kids on the Eastside, South LA. or any other low-income areas in the city of Los Angeles,” Huizar said.

Alcohol advertisements take up about 20 percent of the space offered on bus shelters and benches in five council districts surveyed by members of Alcohol Justice, which pushed for the ordinance.

The prohibition would apply to new advertising contracts, in particular those with the Bureau of Street Services, which manages bus shelters and benches, but would not affect existing contracts.

Alcohol Justice’s advocacy director, Jorge E. Castillo, said the city currently has about seven years left on a contract with outdoor advertising company JCDecaux.

The prohibition would not affect all property owned or controlled by the city. The Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles Zoo, Los Angeles International Airport and other city-controlled properties would be exempt because they operate restaurants, sell alcohol or serve as venues for sports events, concerts and other types of entertainment.

City libraries and the Recreation and Parks would also be technically exempt, but Castillo said those places currently do not have alcohol advertising.

The ban drew support today from representatives of Mothers of East L.A., the Koreatown Youth and Community Center, Pueblo y Salud, Inc. and other community groups.

Margot Bennett, executive director of Women Against Gun Violence, said the organization also supports the ban because there is a “definite” link between alcohol and gun violence.

Those pushing for the ban said they will next tackle alcohol advertising on private property, including when the City Council considers a sign district outside LAX and proposed regulation that would allow digital billboards on private property.

Dennis Hathaway, president of Ban Billboard Blight, urged the City Council to “think seriously about not allowing alcohol advertising on any public property anywhere, not just on the street furniture.”

The Department of Transportation already has a policy barring alcohol and tobacco advertising on city transit vehicles such as DASH, as does Metro, which runs the county’s transportation system.

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