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Proposed state legislation could push back last calls for bars



By Ambika Jaykrishna | Staff

State Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, announced legislation Wednesday that would allow local governments to decide how late alcohol can be served.

If approved, the Let Our Communities Adjust Late Night, or LOCAL, Act would allow the previously set 2 a.m. time for last calls at bars in California to be pushed back as late as 4 a.m. The legislature has been met with both positive and negative reactions.

“By granting local control to our cities to extend their late night hours, we can support areas that benefit economically and culturally from a strong nightlife presence, while ensuring that other cities and neighborhoods retain their current rules,” Wiener said in a press release Wednesday.

A similar act was proposed in 2013 by former state senator Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, but it failed to garner enough votes. The opposition to this legislature was spearheaded by Alcohol Justice as well as many civilians who believed it would lead to more noise, traffic and drunk driving incidents.

Clientele at bars around the Berkeley area said they believed the passing of the bill would generate more business not only for the bars but also for people who count on the success of such establishments to earn money.

“It would probably increase business and things that are associated with that sort of industry, like food and artists,” said Anthony Kitchin, a 36-year-old Berkeley resident. “Food joints that stay open till late at night would definitely benefit from this.”

Others, however, are concerned regarding how the new legislation will affect safety around campus. UC Berkeley senior Smitha Gundavajhala said she believed the bill posed a safety threat because a later last call would reduce customers’ incentives to go home.

Because the LOCAL Act does not mandate changes to last call, it is possible that even if the act passes, it will not affect bars in Berkeley. Theo Gillie, a bartender at Kip's Bar, said he doesn't think the act will impact the Berkeley area.

"To be honest, Berkeley to me has always been incredibly conservative," Gillie said. "There's a lot of history from the university that lingers onto the state. The city of Berkeley would be conservative in extending those hours."

Bradford Bailey, a graduate student at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, also said he believed the legislation would have a minimal effect on the city of Berkeley.

"I think that certain cities have a certain culture, where they party that late. It is woven in the fabric of the city," Bradford said. "For Berkeley, it would be good for employees who want to extend hours, but it would be expensive for employers who might not find business for those hours."

Sen. Scott Weiner could not be reached for a comment as of press time.

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