

## Should bars be open until 4 am?

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Created 03/15/2013 - 4:56pm



State Sen. Mark Leno is introducing a bill that would allow (not require, allow) cities to designate areas where bars could stay open and serve alcohol until 4 am. It's not going to lead to a rampage of all-night drinking -- the bill calls for a three-stage approval system that would allow public input at every step. But it might allow a handful of clubs in the city to stay open later -- something that works just fine in a lot of other places, including most of New York State.

I grew up in a small town north of New York City (it was called North Tarrytown then, Sleepy Hollow now) and all the bars were open until 4. No big deal; even the hard-core people usually left well before that.

Then I went to college in Middletown, Connecticut, where people think it's still 18th Century Puritan New England and all bars have to close at 1 am. At about 12:30, everyone would hear last call, chug as much as they could, and spill out onto the streets, and the cops never had an easy time of it.

That's why, when Seattle considered this, the police department was all in favor <sup>[1]</sup>.

But already, there's opposition, some of it from people who just think everyone should drink less -- and some of it from Bruce Lee Livingston at Alcohol Justice <sup>[2]</sup>, who usually spends his time trying to tax drinks to pay for the costs of treating alcohol problems.

I didn't get why Livingston was fighting this, so I called him up -- and after we talked about whether the later hours at a small number of clubs in a few parts of the city will lead to more drinking and more problems (he thinks so, citing [http://www.ca-cpi.org/docs/Publications/Policy\\_Briefs/RestaurantsThatMor...](http://www.ca-cpi.org/docs/Publications/Policy_Briefs/RestaurantsThatMor...) <sup>[3]</sup> "target="\_blank"> this; I disagree), he started talking about how dense San Francisco has become and how late-night clubs could harm residents who live near them. "San Francisco is becoming a daytime city," he said. Sunday Streets, hiking, healthy lifestyles ... all of those things conflict for Livingston with the notion of late-night drinking. Between 2 am and 4 am, he said, people "are trying to get some rest."

Which is an argument against having active nightlife in an area where there are also residences, a major battle for years in San Francisco. But I have to say: The clubs in Soma moved into that area long before there was much of any residential use, and the condos came later -- and I'm sorry, but when you move into a place next to a nightclub, you can't expect silence at night.

I think with all of the tech workers who work unusual and long hours, this is becoming MORE of a late-night town. I hope so. We'll see.

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[1] [http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2015613651\\_liquor15m.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2015613651_liquor15m.html)

[2] <http://alcoholjustice.org/>

[3] <http://www.sfbg.com/%3Ca%20href%3D>