

Wine cooler issue: handling fees for stores

By Tim Richard
staff writer

A proposed 10-cent deposit on wine cooler and mixed drink containers is scheduled for a floor vote by the state House of Representatives today after sailing 10-1 through a committee Wednesday.

The big debate will be over amendments affecting retailers and beverage distributors.

"Ten cents is fair," said Rep. Mat Dunaskiss, R-Lake Orion, who voted for the no-compromise measure in committee.

THE HOUSE Liquor Control Committee quickly dropped a so-called compromise measure reducing the deposit on wine cooler bottles to five cents after it was bitterly denounced by Thomas L. Washington, executive director of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

MUCC spearheaded the 1976 voter

initiative that enacted a deposit law for beer and pop and is continuing its petition drive for a wine cooler deposit vote.

Dunaskiss, the only Observer & Eccentric area lawmaker on the committee, said a survey of his northern Oakland district shows "in excess of 90 percent are in favor" of extending the deposit law to wine coolers and mixed drinks.

THE KEY questions today, however, aren't whether it will be passed but how it will be amended to appeal to business groups.

Grocery stores pleaded for a two-cent "handling fee" because of costs they incur in returning cans and bottles to the plants. That amendment was rejected on a 7-4 vote.

The other amendment, which passed 9-2, would permit distributors to be given exclusive territories for wine coolers.

The MUCC's Washington, asked if

that were acceptable, said, "Well — yeah. We won't go to the mat on that. But the consumers and retailers might be uplight about exclusive territories."

He said MUCC's petition drive would continue until a bill is passed by both houses of the Legislature and signed by the governor.

DUNASKISS, WHO supported both amendments, called them fair.

"I think a two-cent handling fee for 'Mom and Pop' retailers is fair," said Dunaskiss, whose north Oakland district includes Oakland Township.

"We heard testimony that the wholesalers are taking in \$20 million to \$30 million a year" for cans and bottles that are never redeemed. Lawmakers backing the two-cent handling fee for retailers said the money could come from that "float" without being tacked onto purchase prices.

Washington said the handling fee

idea was all right. "But this is not the bill to do it on." The MUCC chief said he would be "willing to sit down and work with them" on a separate bill.

Spokesmen for the Michigan Merchants Council said Michigan and Oregon are the only two states, of nine with deposit laws, which fall to give retailers a handling fee. They said each Kroger supermarket, for example, spends \$509 a week on labor, accounting and management time for handling returnables — a total of \$1.5 million a year in Michigan.

Although the handling fee amendment lost in committee, Dunaskiss predicted an effort to add it in floor debate before the full 110-member House.

THE EXCLUSIVE territory for distributors was assured in a separate bill that is "lie-barred" to the wine cooler bill — that is, neither becomes law unless both are signed.

"The idea of territories seems to be fair," said Dunaskiss. "If they (distributors) don't have them, somebody can come in, dump a product 'John Q. Winecooler,' and you're sitting there with all those 'John Q.' bottles that are unredeemable."

But Washington opposed the tie-bar procedure and the whole territories idea.

"The sole purpose is to grant an exclusive right to certain distributors to sell wine coolers in certain territories, thereby stifling competition," he said.

Washington added that granting exclusive territories would "give the beer and wine wholesalers the perfect excuse for raising prices and

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blaming these cost increases on the "Bottle Bill" as they did when the original bill passed in 1976.

THE PANEL rejected an amendment by Rep. Carl Gnodtke, R-Sawyer, to extend the deposit law to hard liquor.

Opponents generally felt liquor bottles don't wind up on roadsides, parks, beaches and lawns with the same frequency that pop, beer, wine cooler and mixed drink containers do.

OU will honor jurist, 3 faculty

G. Mennen Williams, retiring chief justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree when Oakland University holds commencement exercises at 2 p.m. Sunday.

Two OU faculty members from Rochester Hills will share in a \$1,000 teaching excellence award in ceremonies in Baldwin Pavilion on campus, and a third will receive a research excellence grant.

OU will award 434 undergraduate and 199 graduate degrees, including four doctorates — one in biomedical sciences and three in systems engineering.

WILLIAMS, who retires at the end of the year after 16 years on the high court, has been in public affairs for 50 years.

He was a six-term governor from 1949-60, then secretary of state for African affairs and U.S. ambassador to the Philippines in the Kennedy-Johnson administration.

In 1967, Williams gave OU his 218-piece collection of African art, the core of what is now a permanent collection of sculpture and painting in Meadow Brook Art Gallery.

FACULTY members cited will be:

- Robert I. Facko, music — "respected and held in deep affection" by students for his motivation, accessibility and enthusiasm.
- Richard B. Stamps, sociology

and anthropology — "epitomizes the term teacher," cited for "infinite patience, genuine caring and humor."

He and Facko will share the outstanding teacher prize.

• Ronald D. Hansen, psychology — recipient of a \$1,000 research excellence award by the OU Research Committee.

Outstanding alumni also will be honored at commencement.



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The custom swatches for Polo by Ralph Lauren will be
available during the entire month of September.

Gas bill cut due in October

Consumers Power Co. will make a one-time refund in October of about \$27.3 million to its 1.2 million natural gas customers.

The refund was approved this week by the Michigan Public Service Commission.

The typical natural gas residential customer will receive a bill credit of approximately \$13 in October.

The majority of the refund is due to a rate settlement reached between Trunkline Gas Co., Consumers Power's main supplier, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for gas Trunkline sold between December 1983 and February 1985.

Under the settlement Consumers Power received approximately \$21 million which, with interest, is being refunded to its customers.

The refund also includes approximately \$2.2 million in profits from gas storage, \$1.3 million in a Marysville property tax settlement, and other lesser amounts from miscellaneous sources.

Charles F. Brown, vice president for customer services and marketing for Consumers Power, said, "In addition to this one-time refund, we have previously announced that for the winter the natural gas rates of our customers are decreasing about 12 percent."

"This 12 percent reduction, the result of anticipated lower purchase costs from our pipeline suppliers, plus a recent Consumers Power rate settlement with the Michigan Public Service Commission, means an estimated annual savings beginning Sept. 1 of an additional \$181 million for our 1.2 million natural gas customers," said Brown.

Consumers Power Co. is Michigan's largest utility, serving almost six million of the state's nine million residents in 67 of the 68 Lower Peninsula counties.

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Banana Republic: A Short History
Chapter 1

**Never buy clothing
by the pound
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