

Deposits for wine coolers

MUCC claims victory for its petition drive

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Declaring victory, the Michigan United Conservation Clubs suspended its drive for 300,000 petition signatures to put a bill requiring deposits on wine coolers on the ballot.

"The bill does basically what we set out to do," said MUCC spokesman Don Stypula after the state Senate passed a 10-cent deposit law. "Our concern was to require a dime deposit on each single-serving drink container."

"Had it not been for those petitions, there's no way the Senate and House would have dealt with those bills. People can make a difference," said Stypula, a one-time Schoolcraft College student and news broadcaster who is now chief publicist for MUCC chief Thomas L. Washington. When, as expected, Gov. James J. Blanchard signs two tie-barred bills, deposits will become state law June 1, 1989. All seven area senators supported both bills.

MUCC IN 1976 won passage of an initiative petition for a deposit law for pop and beer, and this summer it collected 218,000 signatures to expand deposits to wine coolers and the new mixed drinks such as the 12-ounce Jim Beam & Coke.

Thursday's Senate vote ended months of debate before the Liquor Control Commission (passed), Legislative Joint Administrative Rules

Committee (declared LCC's action null and void) and both houses of the Legislature.

Without legislative action, MUCC would have filed its petitions by Nov. 4, seeking a 1988 ballot spot for its proposal.

The Legislature actually passed two tie-barred bills: the deposit law and a measure allowing wine cooler wholesalers exclusive territories. MUCC grudgingly accepted the second bill in a spirit of political compromise.

UNHAPPY WITH the bills are grocers in the Michigan Food Dealers Association.

Grocers wanted a two-cents handling charge for each can and bottle. MFDA contends such large markets as Farmer Jack's and Meljers's spend millions on equipment and wages to redeem containers which people purchased at gas stations and party stores.

They and MUCC say the two cents could come from the "float" — the \$48 million in cans and bottles that are never redeemed.

"In almost every other state with a bottle deposit law, grocers are paid a handling fee," said Paul K. K. Jr., president of the trade group. "After the election, the association will seek a handling fee, a tax credit or some type of recognition for the costs retailers bear."

They can count on support from at least one suburbanite on the House

Liquor Control Committee — Rep. Mat Dunaskiss, R-Lake Orion.

THE TWIN bills were passed on the final day of a special two-week session.

But the lopsided margins — 32-3 for the deposit bill and 34-0 for the territorial bill — belied the intense debate and floor maneuvering which preceded it.

Three outstate senators voted against the deposit bill, declaring it also should apply to liquor bottles. An amendment to add liquor bottles to the bill lost 21-7. Among local senators, only R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, supported it.

MUCC sought deposit laws only for single-drink containers. Washington argued in committee that package liquor is generally consumed at home and doesn't generate the same litter as beer, pop, wine coolers and canned highballs.

Senate Majority Leader John Engler, R-Mt. Pleasant, said, "I know of no reason why liquor bottles shouldn't be included. I would be willing to come back in November and deal with it" in a separate bill.

SOME SENATORS sought to move up the effective date from 1989 to one year from the date of adoption. But sponsors backed off, fearing that if the Senate passed a version different from the House's, the bill would be thrown into a conference committee.

"Half a loaf is better than none," said Sen. Mitch Irwin, D-Sault Ste. Marie. "Rather than allow a conference committee to get this, our best interest is to put this bill through now."

House and Senate versions of a bill must be identical before it can become law.

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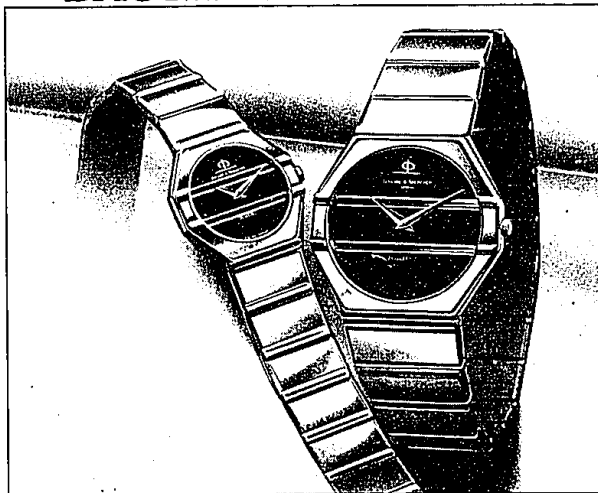
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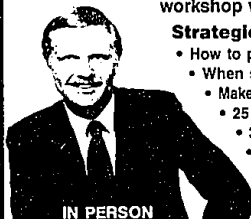
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NOVI HILTON (Intersection of I-75 & 8 Mile Rd.)	NORTHFIELD HILTON (175; Exit Crooks Road)	SOUTHFIELD CIVIC CENTER (2500 Evergreen Rd. at 10 1/2 Mile Rd. Meeting Room at North End of Complex)	HYATT DEARBORN Fairlane Town Center opposite Ford World Headquarters on Fairlane Rd.)

Bring your note pad or tape recorder.

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