

'House party' bill would jail, fine adults

Adults hosting kids at graduation house parties face jail and fines if they serve people under 21 alcohol under a bill before the Michigan Senate.

"Spring is when we have house parties," said the sponsor, Sen. Fred Dillingham, R-Fowlerville. "This is a gray area (of the law) — a party in a private home where they're not selling alcohol."

After their testimony, Chairman "Long overdue," said Bethany Goodman of Midland, representing Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). "We should encourage kids to avoid

temptations . . . Kids laugh at laws."

Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, and the Judiciary Committee sent it to the Senate floor on a 3-0 vote.

THE BILL would provide that a person in control of a residence or building could be convicted of a misdemeanor for allowing a minor who is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian to consume or possess alcohol at a social gathering.

Punishment would be the standard for a misdemeanor: up to 90 days in jail and a fine of up to \$500.

'Long overdue. We should encourage kids to avoid temptations . . . Kids laugh at laws.'

— Bethany Goodman
Mothers Against Drunk Driving

According to a Senate staff analysis, it would apply to houses, apartments, cottages, hotels-motels, meeting halls, conference rooms, parks, trailers, tents and bed-and-breakfast units.

But it would not apply to alcohol used for religious purposes and prescriptions. Nor would it apply when the minor is accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Similar local ordinances have

been passed in Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield, Birmingham and Beverly Hills. City officials in Bloomfield Hills are also considering an ordinance.

DILLINGHAM SEES passage in the Senate but trouble in the House. "This is a rerun of a bill which passed the Senate unanimously (in the last session)," he said, "but it was killed in Bullard's committee."

Rep. Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor, chairs the House Judiciary Committee and frequently objects because he considers many legislative bills too punitive and repressive.

Dillingham said Bullard "arbitrarily killed it (last session) because of

his apparent conscience. But the system is supposed to operate with 148 members."

"The bill makes adults aware they are responsible. In the last five or six years in Livingston County, a number of kids have been killed in auto accidents."

"A parent called me and told me his daughter was with a boy, and they visited his aunt and uncle's house. The daughter came home at 5 a.m. The parent asked: What about those two adults (serving alcohol)?"

Dillingham said current law would allow heirs to file civil suit against the adult server if a youngster were killed but appears to provide no punishment in lesser cases.

Supreme Court to hear JOA

The proposed joint operating agreement between the Detroit News and Detroit Free Press is on hold once again.

The U.S. Supreme Court Monday said it will hear the JOA case. A decision is not expected until next year.

This latest development comes on the heels of reports that set May 5 as a possible start up date for the JOA, which would merge operations of Detroit's two daily newspapers.

"I'M HAPPY the First Amendment is alive and well," said Ed Wendover, publisher of the Plymouth Community Crier and spokesman for Michigan Citizens for an

Independent Press, which has led the fight against implementation of the JOA.

"Despite what the News and Free Press have been saying this weekend, the JOA is not a done deal. I wish the Supreme Court would move it up on the docket this spring. I would be happy to see it expedited for the sake of Free Press and News employees."

The on again/off again JOA has been battered about like a ball in a tennis match for almost three years. It is not expected that the high court will hear arguments before late fall, and then take several more months for a ruling.

MOST RECENTLY before Mon-

day's announcement, stays blocking the newspapers merger were extended even though federal judges upheld the JOA decision approved by then Attorney General Edwin Meese in August 1988.

JOA opponents have long sought a hearing before the full court.

"We have said all along that we would seek a hearing before the full Supreme Court," Robert Dreyfus, a spokesman for the Washington D.C.-based Public Citizen, said after the March stay. The Ralph Nader backed group provided funding to the anti-JOA forces.

State Sen. John Kelly, D-Grosse Pointe Woods, who has led local

JOA opposition along with Wendover and former Detroit News reporter Malt Beer, called the high court's decision "the best thing that ever happened in terms of the future of the First Amendment."

The hearing is at least a temporary victory for JOA opponents, who saw it as a last possible means of challenge.

If Meese's approval of the JOA had gone unchallenged, it would have been the largest such newspaper agreement in U.S. history.

Opponents have challenged Meese at several points in approving the JOA, primarily that it would kill competition and undermine federal anti-trust law.

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