



Office of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission

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PRESS RELEASE:
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Liquor Laws in Arizona Only Benefit Liquor License Owners Not Communities.

ST. MICHAELS, NAVAJO NATION (AZ) – The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission, the Navajo Nation Council and the Renewal of Hope Taskforce continues its fight with Arizona liquor board surrounding liquor licenses that are affecting Nahatá Dziil, Houck, Lupton, Chambers, and surrounding communities.

Since March 2014 the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission and the Renewal of Hope Taskforce examined and evaluated Arizona statutory requirements for stopping the sale of alcohol. Mr. Gary McDonald, initial owner, was arrested and charged with felony offenses that put the liquor licenses and stores in limbo in January of 2014.

After intense review and study of the statutes, it is evident the liquor laws are designed to protect the sale and distribution of alcohol in Arizona. “It’s clear that the liquor department’s position is to continue liquor sales in Arizona because these sales generate revenue and jobs. But in the case of Sanders and Chambers liquor stores there is no evidence of contributing to the local economy except the ever increasing concerns about alcohol abuse” stated Leonard Gorman, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Human Right Commission.

It is very important to show the Liquor Board that the community wants to end the sale of alcohol in Sanders and Chambers. “We need to restore a healthy and lively community based on business principles that develop communities and not destroy communities” says Ina Noggle.

With Gary McDonald arrested and charged with felony offenses, steps were taken on his behalf to sell all liquor licenses and transfer them to George A. Ryan, who is the current manger of the Ole Red Barn.

On July 22, 2014 the Apache County Board of Supervisors disapproved the license transfer after hearing testimony on the merits of Ryan’s qualification, reliability and capability for assuming the legal responsibility to operate the liquor establishments.

November 6, 2014 was the final hearing by Arizona Liquor Board for granting or denying the license transfer to George A. Ryan. However, all parties agreed on a continuance, and postponed the November 6 hearing until January 8, 2015.

There is also a growing concern about amendments to the Arizona alcohol laws. Some of the language in Title IV (A.R.S. §4-210-10) requires the owner or manager of the liquor

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outlet to report on themselves when a liquor violation has occurred. The self-reporting mechanism will be hi-jacked by the need to ensure high profit margins.

With the current liquor laws in Arizona designed to protect the liquor establishment and owner it is taking years to close the liquor stores in Sanders and Chambers. In the past decade Nahatá Dziil community members have voiced their concerns about the ill effects of the sales of alcohol in the community.

For more information please call the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission 928-871-7436.

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