

## **Bay State Legislators to Address Wine Direct Shipping Bill**

Long Awaited Hearing Scheduled for November 12 at State House

November 8, 2013, Napa, CA – Massachusetts legislators have scheduled a hearing on House Bill 294, which promises to replace an unconstitutional law with a proven wine direct shipping solution, according to Free the Grapes!, a national coalition of consumers, wineries and retailers seeking legal, regulated wine direct shipping. [www.freethegrapes.org](http://www.freethegrapes.org)

The Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure will be hearing more than a dozen bills – including several wine direct shipping bills—on Tuesday, November 12, 2013 between 1:00 PM and 6:00 PM in Gardner Auditorium at the State House. Consumers may attend the session although it is not known exactly when the direct shipping bills will be considered.

Authored by Representative Theodore (Ted) C. Speliotis, H. 294 includes language similar to wine direct shipping laws now in place and working well in the majority of U.S. states. The bill requires the state to issue wineries a permit to ship wine directly to consumers, and licensed wineries are required to pay excise taxes, report shipments and limit the amount of wine shipped to consumers, among other provisions.

### **Bledsoe's Media Blitz**

The bill received widespread support at consumer wine events earlier this year, and a visit to Boston by Drew Bledsoe. Free the Grapes! met with thousands of wine lovers attending three popular wine events in Boston, the Boston Wine Expo in February and the Second Glass "Wine Riot" events in April and October.

In March, former New England Patriots quarterback Drew Bledsoe blitzed Boston in support of wine direct shipping. The former NFL star is now proprietor of Doubleback Winery in Washington state. "Everyone wins with HB 294 – wine lovers get access to the wines they want, wineries have a proven set of regulations, and the state collects additional tax revenues," said Drew Bledsoe.

### **Background**

A Massachusetts law barring winery-to-consumer shipments from wineries producing more than 30,000 gallons per year and who retain Massachusetts wholesalers was ruled unconstitutional by District Court Judge Rya Zobel, and then affirmed by the U.S. 1st Circuit Court of Appeals in January 2010. The legislature was expected to conform to the ruling by passing a bill similar to the model bill.

In 2011, House Bill 1029 was introduced to conform to Judge Zobel's ruling, but it languished in committee throughout 2012. House Bill 294 was introduced January 18, 2013.

Massachusetts is the second largest of nine states that currently prohibit winery-to-consumer wine shipments. The other states include: Utah, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Alabama, South Dakota, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Delaware.

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