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State Representative Senfronia Thompson, D-Houston, filed House Bill 421 Jan. 9, which would allow liquor stores to sell distilled spirits on Sundays.

Jan. 27, 2013

Your drive home from church Sunday could soon include a trip to the liquor store. State Representative Senfronia Thompson, D-Houston, filed House Bill 421 Jan. 9, which would allow liquor stores to sell distilled spirits on Sundays.

Currently only beer and wine can be sold on Sundays. Beer and wine retailers are allowed to sell up to 115 hours per week, while distilled spirits retailers are only allowed to stay open up to 66 hours per week.

"Sunday is the largest day consumers shop," Thompson said. "This is the last blue law we have on the books in Texas and there's no reason it shouldn't be lifted."

Currently, distilled spirits can be purchased Sundays at only restaurants and bars.

"The real issue is allowing consumers to purchase distilled spirits and go home, rather than have them drinking somewhere, then getting behind the wheel and going home," Thompson said. "It's going to create a safer highway and streets because instead of drinking and driving home, they can make their purchase and go home."

But many local liquor stores are opposed to the bill.

"I'm against the bill because I feel our people need a day off and it will increase our operational expenses." Austin Keith, owner of Pinkie's chain of liquor stores, based in Odessa, and president of the Texas Package Stores Association in Austin, which has been representing the Texas liquor store industry since 1947, said.

“All it will do is spread six days worth of sales over seven days,” Pinkie’s Marketing

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However, Keith said if one liquor store decides to open, they will have to stay open Sundays to compete for business.

“The bill advocates we will be open on Sundays and wants to extend our hours of operation by one hour earlier and one hour later Monday through Saturday,” Keith said. “We have taken ballots and across the state, package store owners are against Sunday sales of distilled spirits. That’s their one day off and if this passes, those people would be opening seven days a week. I think about those people, not just myself.”

“It will probably take business away from the bar and restaurant part of our business,” Becker added. “Those people are our customers also and we just feel like that accommodates anyone who wants to have a drink on Sunday who doesn’t already have it at their house. They have an outlet to go consume their beverage of choice.”

Scott Cooksey, owner of Kari’s and Western Drug liquor stores in Odessa, said he is also against the bill because of the increased cost to operate for the extra hours.

“We’re open six days a week, eleven hours a day and I enjoy a day off since I’ve got kids,” Cooksey said. “It’s hard to get people to work seven days a week and most people buy on Saturday in my experience. Then beer and wine you can get on Sundays. I don’t know who would be for it. If we’re the Texas package stores, and we’re a group of mom-and-pop stores and we’re against it and we probably would gain some, who would gain more? Probably the sales tax people and the state of Texas are looking for money.”

Thompson estimates the state could stand to gain about \$8 million in new revenue by expanding the hours of liquor stores, but she maintains that isn’t the focus of the bill.

“That’s a very small issue of the whole bill,” Thompson said. “Beer and wine can be

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how to use it.”

Odessa resident Carol Ward, 66, agreed with Macias.

“It seems like we get more and more lenient on our liquor sales,” Ward, a local business owner, said. “I’d just as soon they only sell it at the limited time they can now.”

Odessa resident Geno Montes, 38, said he thinks people should have the option to purchase liquor on Sundays even though he wouldn’t necessarily participate.

“I play golf on Sundays and I know you can’t drink until after 12 p.m.,” Montes said. “I guess it doesn’t really matter for me because I’m not a big drinker, but if it was friends they probably would like it.”

Although Montes said he probably won’t drink on Sundays, he thinks it’s every American’s right to make that choice for themselves.

“Anybody should be able to buy anything at any time if they so choose to,” Montes said. “If they want to drink Sunday, that’s fine. It’s their business.”

Bartender and Odessa College business sophomore Erica Norris, 19, said she didn’t know people couldn’t purchase liquor on Sundays and doesn’t think it’s a bad idea to be able to purchase it.

“They drink every other night, so it’s not really any different,” Norris said. “I’m pretty sure they drink on Sundays anyway because they probably buy extra on other days and drink it on Sundays.”

John Hatch is a consultant for Texas Petition Strategies, a company based in Austin that specializes in local option alcohol campaigns in Texas. Hatch has helped put

forth more than 230 petitions relating to this bill in Texas in the last 10 years and

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Sunday afternoon. That sounds perfectly good to me. The bottom line is people should have a choice on where to purchase their alcohol before they go home to watch their Sunday football.”

“We would be joining 38 states that already have allowed distilled spirits to be sold on Sundays,” Thompson said. “They’re already selling beer and wine. What’s wrong with selling distilled spirits? Why discriminate against people to have that choice?”

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State and Local Taxes

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