
Regulated Substances & Gaming Committee

SSB 5291

Brief Description: Concerning liquor licenses.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Schoesler, Dozier, Mullet, King, Wagoner, Lias and Rolfes).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB) to issue a decision on an application for certain liquor licenses and endorsements within 45 days, subject to an exception allowing extension of the time period by an additional 30 days for good cause while issuing a temporary license.
- Provides that applications for certain liquor licenses and endorsements are approved by default if the LCB does not issue a decision within the specified time.
- Removes a requirement that the written notice that the LCB must send to public institutions, churches, and schools must be sent "with receipt verification," and specifies that any required notifications in the liquor licensing process may be issued concurrently.

Hearing Date: 2/15/24

Staff: Peter Clodfelter (786-7127).

Background:

The Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB) issues various liquor licenses and license endorsements to qualified applicants wishing to engage in the manufacture, distribution, or retail sale of liquor

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in Washington. When considering applications for liquor licenses and renewals of liquor licenses, the LCB may inspect the premises proposed to be licensed, and may inquire into all matters in connection with the construction and operation of the premises. The LCB may consider any prior criminal conduct of the applicant including an administrative violation history record with the LCB and a criminal history record information check.

The LCB sends notice of the application and any license renewal application to the chief executive officer of the incorporated city or town, if the application is for a license within an incorporated city or town, or to the county legislative authority, if the license is for an application outside of an incorporated city or town.

The local government may file written objections with the LCB against the applicant or against the premises for which the new or renewal license applies, and may request a hearing that the LCB has discretion to hold. For applications for new licenses, the written objections must be filed within 20 days after the date of transmittal of the notice. For license renewals, the written objections must be received at least 30 days prior to the license expiration date.

Before the LCB issues any liquor license it must give due consideration to the proposed location with respect to the proximity of public institutions, churches, and schools. Public institutions are defined as institutions of higher education, parks, community centers, libraries, and transit centers. The LCB must send written notice, with receipt verification, of the application to public institutions, churches, and schools within 500 feet of the premises proposed to be licensed.

The LCB may not issue a liquor license for either on-premises or off-premises consumption covering any premises not currently licensed, if the premises is within 500 feet of any tax-supported public elementary or secondary school and the LCB receives written objection, within 20 days after receiving the notice, from an official representative of the school indicating there is an objection to the issuance of the license due to proximity to the school.

The LCB has discretion to issue a temporary retail or distributor license to an applicant to operate while the license application is pending. Temporary licenses are for a period not to exceed 60 days, but the period may be extended for additional periods of 60 days upon payment of an additional fee and upon compliance with all conditions required by law.

Summary of Bill:

The LCB is generally required to issue a decision within 45 days of receiving an application for issuance or renewal of the following liquor licenses and related endorsements, or the application is approved by default:

- the beer and wine restaurant license and the caterer's endorsement;
- the tavern license and the caterer's endorsement;
- the snack bar license;
- the combined license for off-premises consumption that is coupled with the beer and wine restaurant license or the tavern license;

- the spirits, beer, and wine restaurant license and the endorsement for sales of bottled wine for off-premises consumption, the keg endorsement, and the soju endorsement;
- the spirits, beer, and wine private club license and the endorsement for nonclub, member-sponsored events using club liquor and the endorsement for sales of bottled wine for off-premises consumption;
- the beer and wine private club license and the endorsement for sales of bottled wine for off-premises consumption;
- the beer and wine theater license; and
- the spirits, beer, and wine theater license.

However, the LCB may extend the 45 day time period by an additional 30 days if the LCB determines good cause for the extension exists and issues a temporary license during the extension. Good cause may include time for the LCB to review objections. If the LCB fails to issue a decision on an application within the additional 30 days, the temporary license must be converted into a permanent license and is approved by default.

The requirement is removed that the written notice the LCB must provide to public institutions, churches, and schools during the liquor licensing process must be sent "with receipt verification." Last, it is specified that any required notifications related to liquor license issuance or renewal may be issued concurrently.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.