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| **Utah Liquor Laws and their Influences** |
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# Abstract

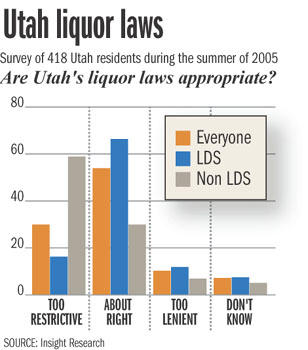
Utah liquor laws have always been a dispute. The population and industry are large influences of the laws, as well as the past 2002 winter olympics. How are the laws today?

# Introduction

Liquor laws have almost always been a source of dispute and legislative argument in the Beehive state, where the rules are much different and somewhat quirky compared too many other states in the U.S. There has been a long history of pushes back and forth on the severity and lenience of the laws that direct the consumption and sale of alcoholic beverages. And to understand how we’ve gotten to this point we need to understand a few of the big influences of the state and what effect they have on the laws regarding alcohol.

# The LDS Church

 It is important to first understand our population in Utah. While the changes are here and still coming, it is no secret that Utah has a very large population of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Having cities with names such as Lehi or Bountiful, both named after locations in the Book of Mormon, the influence is easy to see. The church’s headquarters are located in downtown Salt Lake City, and many individuals who live in Utah is familiar with the culture and beliefs. It is fairly common knowledge that these church members have a health code known as the Word of Wisdom, which prohibits the consumption of strong drink, (alcohol). “*That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before him*.”10 While the sect does believe in moral agency and the right to choose for yourself, it is inevitable that the taboo activity of drinking alcohol is frowned upon. And that agendas leading to more restrictive laws may indeed be influenced by having such a large population that believes it is against the will of God to drink strong drinks. Of course not all people will think that way that belong to the religion but it is safe to say based on.

This survey was done by the Deseret news in 2005. If you look at the two categories “too restrictive”, and “too lenient”, you will see a marked difference in the opinions of LDS vs. Non LDS opinions. About double the amount of Non LDS people said that the laws were too restrictive. Opposed to about double the amount of LDS persons to Non LDS persons said that the laws were too lenient. While this survey may be from 2005 the commandments of the LDS church have not changed, and the consumption of alcohol is still forbidden. However the population has changed and the amount of non LDS residents continues to <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/635167477/Utahns-dont-support-looser-state-liquor-laws-group-says.html?s_cid=s10> grow in the state of Utah, which would indicate and increasing public opinion to reduce the strict laws.

# Utah’s tourism and hospitality industry

Utah is a very alluring land with many attractions to visitors. The beautiful mountains provide a wide spectrum of activities including; skiing, hiking, camping, etc. Not to mention the rich history of the state as an important part of the westward expansion. And as such a large and important part of our economy, many places find it hard to attract customers with such strict laws in place regarding their sale of alcohol. Many places like the Vuda Bar, (shown at left), are restricted immensely by the laws. While some <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/20/us/20liquor.html?_r=1> were taken down, many of these “Zion Curtains” remain up in restaurants in Utah. These sheets of glass, usually frosted are designed to prevent the customer from seeing any alcohol until they order it. Its aim was to make drinking in public unusual. *"It's just kind of pointless to have clear glass in front of us. It really takes away from the personal experience of our customers," said Abbie Daggs, a manager at Stella Grill in suburban Salt Lake City. "A lot of people are surprised when they see it and ask about the Zion curtain, and we have to explain why it's there. They're always shocked."*7 New laws coming into effect will eliminate any specials for alcoholic beverages at any time, eliminating a whole facet of competition between establishments, in addition to the harsh prices that businesses must purchase their alcohol from the state.The laws are so infamous that there are souvenir shot glasses that read “Eat, drink and be merry-tomorrow you may be in Utah.” as well as jokes about being “Slower than Salt Lake City on a Saturday night.”6 As the economy gets more strained the laws may become less restrictive to accommodate the tourism industry in to attract new customers.

# The 2002 Winter Olypmics

 One big boost in the direction towards looser liquor laws in Utah was the winter Olympics held here in 2002. In an effort to seem more normal to the rest of the world and to put Utah on a globally recognized map the laws were loosened up a bit for the events.11 Selected companies were allowed to sell their alcoholic products in public areas for certain occasions. Never before has Utah seen such a giant influx of outsiders into the state, many of whom were still surprised at the strict “relaxed” laws. After the Olympics lawmakers realized that no significant catastrophe had http://www.mackrazdesign.com/logos/2002\_Winter\_Olympics\_logo.png

been caused by loosening up a little, paving the way for the changes in 2003 that relaxed the laws even further.

# Laws today

The laws today are still restrictive but it’s not impossible to get a drink. Many Zion Curtains have come down and the club membership laws are no longer in place. However Utah still restricts the number of alcohol licenses available to businesses based off the population, and of these they only allow alcohol to be sold at 3.2% on tap, that’s about half of what the rest of the country has available, anything heavier must be bought at a state controlled liquor store. In order to have an alcoholic drink in restaurant, food must be purchased as well. New restaurants will be required to prepare drinks in a back room or have a Zion Curtain erected at the bar. No drinks may be brought into the state without express sanction of the state government, doing so is illegal and may incur prosecution.

# Conclusions

The liquor laws of Utah will change over and over again, as long as the pattern holds true. As the influences ebb and flow, so will their laws. We could make a reasonable prediction that as time goes on, that the current direction of things will point towards loosening the liquor laws. But it is up to our elected officials, whom we choose, to change things. If alcohol laws are something important that needs reform it is up to us to make the decisions. As for now Utah will remain one of the most unique states in regards to its alcoholic beverage control, providing our population with a unique twist to either selling or buying a drink.

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