

Sunday sales should get vote

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One of the big issues in the state legislature during the next few days will be whether or not voters in cities and counties should be allowed to vote on whether or not they will allow alcohol sales on Sunday in their communities.

Georgia is one of three states that does not allow the retail sale of alcohol on Sunday; the other two are Connecticut and Indiana. Polls conducted on the issue have indicated overwhelming support for Sunday sales. An internet petition has been circulated with more than 50,000 signatures of individuals from all political persuasions who simply want a choice in the matter on the local level.

The issue of Sunday alcohol sales has been something that Republicans have wanted to avoid because it puts factions of the party against each other: the free-market/less government faction, who has been neglected in recent years, and the social authoritarian faction, whose agenda has been given legislative priority but has seen its influence diminished.

The Georgia Christian Coalition and the Georgia Christian Alliance are both steadfastly against the proposal and are determined to control what Georgians can and cannot purchase on any given day of the week if it does not fit their agenda.

A third pillar of Republican support, the business community, is divided. Grocery and convenience store owners support retail Sunday sales as it would allow them to sell 100 percent of their inventory every day they are open. Liquor stores, which are usually owned by small businessmen active in local politics, are not open on Sundays and would not see an enough of an increase in sales to offset the cost of being open on Sunday.

Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle has shown little interest in pushing the issue in the State Senate; however, Republican leadership in the State House is forcing the issue by tacking on the language that would allow Sunday sales to a local measure dealing with alcohol sales on Sunday for the stadium where the Gwinnett Braves will play in 2009.

Gov. Sonny Perdue, a teetotaler, has taken a hyperbolic tone by comparing Sunday sales to prostitution. Perdue said, "Do we want to let the people choose to allow prostitution? Where are we going to draw the line?"

That comment shows how irrational Gov. Perdue has been on this issue. The State of Georgia has no legitimate reason to block sales of alcohol on Sunday. Perdue says that six days are enough to buy alcohol. What exactly does that mean in a free society? Six days a week are plenty to buy an automobile, but it would be ridiculous to mandate car dealers be closed on Saturdays. It should be noted that as a state senator, Perdue did not take such a hard-line stand against the sale of alcohol on Sundays when the legislature passed the bill allowing restaurants and bars to sell alcohol on Sunday just prior to the Olympics.

Republicans have long claimed to be purveyors of less government, individual responsibility and local control, but they are - once again - failing to live up to the rhetoric. This issue, simply put, is about economic rights. The Republican Liberty Caucus of Georgia probably put it best when they endorsed Sunday sales, noting that, "passage of this measure should be a no-brainer for a party that believes in the free market."

Newton County should be able to vote on the issue whether it stands a chance of passing locally or not.