

When temperance backfires

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Raymond Chen

[South Carolina is] the only state in the nation requiring bars to serve all hard liquor in minibottles. The minibottle's place behind the bar is even enshrined in the state's constitution. Mini-bottles are those cute little single-serving bottles you see on airplanes and in hotel refrigerators. The law was originally passed under pressure from the temperance movement who opposed "free pour" because it created the opportunity for bartenders to "sweeten" a drink. By requiring the liquor to come from a fixed-sized bottle, portion sizes could be kept under control. This worked great for a while. But then social pressures shifted and economics started happening. Across the country, the typical size of an alcoholic beverage started shrinking. But South Carolina's drink size stayed the same, because the size was mandated by law. The result: absurdly huge drinks, like the Long Island Iced Tea that comes in a pitcher. South Carolina ended up with the stiffest drinks in the country, exactly the opposite of what the original drafters intended!

The very people who helped West pass the minibottle law as a way to limit consumption — the teetotalers and religious conservatives — are now helping Hayes's bid to abolish the law.

The effort to repeal the law has been going on for many years, but somehow it always falls short. Maybe this year...

[Raymond is currently on vacation; this message was pre-recorded.]

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