

NEWS & INSIGHTS

Happier hours hopefully lead to happier days: Pa. lawmakers make positive changes for bars/restaurants

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New changes to a Pennsylvania law are designed to help bar/restaurant owners attract more customers through extended happy hours and other promotions.

[HB 829](#) provides bar owners the opportunity to extend happy hour times, allow for discounts on combo meals that include adult beverages and include up to two adult drinks in the entrance fee for a self-sponsored event a bar is

hosting. The bill also makes permanent the temporary extension of premises created as part of the COVID recovery.

Gov. Josh Shapiro [approved the bill Monday](#).

Likely the most important provision is the extension of happy hours from 14 hours per week to 24 hours per week. The current 14 hours per week provides bars the chance to have an average of two hours of discounted happy hour pricing a day each week. Extending the happy hours to 24 hours per week is designed to bring in more customers for longer periods of time. The maximum per day for a happy hour is four hours, consecutive or non-consecutive, and the midnight cutoff for happy hours is still in place.

The extended hours also allow bar owners to be more creative with their designated happy hour times to more than simply cater to the traditional “after-work” crowd. They can use the additional hours to attract patrons when the establishment knows it could use more business. Brewers also get a little bonus time as they can now stay open until 2 a.m. on New Year’s Day and can request a permit to stay open until 2 a.m. on one other day per calendar year.

Under the amendments, bars also will be allowed to offer “combo meals” during happy hours that include an alcoholic beverage. Bars currently can combine food items – such as a \$1 charge for sweet potato fries to go with your buffalo chicken wrap – to provide savings compared to the *a la carte* pricing. But they have never been permitted to include an alcoholic beverage in any combination with food that is discounted. Again, the goal is to allow bars/restaurants more latitude in how and when they can provide discounts in hopes of generating more consumer interest.

Another amendment in the bill will allow bars to include a maximum of two adult drinks in the price of any admission they charge for any of their own events. There is no limit to the number of events a bar can have where they may include the drinks in the price of the entry. The other rules regarding events, tournaments, or contests remain unchanged.

The bill goes into effect Sept. 13.

It is important to note that although these amendments are generally viewed as favorable for most bars, none of the changes in the law are required. Bars don’t have to have happy hours at all, let alone extend the amount of happy hour times for a week. They don’t have to hold events, and they don’t have to serve combo meals.

As the industry continues to adjust to and learn more about the post-pandemic eating/drinking habits of consumers, lawmakers have shown some support by [eliminating or changing antiquated alcohol and bar laws](#) to compete with non-alcoholic establishments, such as fast-food or fast-casual chains.

If you have questions about the new amendments and how they can help your establishment, [please contact me](#).

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