



AT THE BAR WITH BOWDITCH

A Legal Blog for the Craft Brewing Community

Grumbling for Growler Reform

BY ROBERT YOUNG AND MATTHEW BAILEY • JUNE 8, 2015

Do you own too many growlers? I certainly do. With an increasing number of craft breweries offering small-batch brews only packaged in the re-sealable glass, it's an easy predicament to fall into. The source of the problem is that Massachusetts law limits a brewery to filling only glass that displays its own name. Massachusetts craft beer lovers enviously gaze at their peers living in other states where customers can legally fill any growler at any brewery, regardless of where the glass was purchased.

A state representative from Seekonk, Steven Howitt, aims to change Massachusetts law to give a brewery the option to fill any growler it deems appropriate. The craft beer consumer rejoices at the prospect, but a brewer might be wary of losing credit for the fruit of its labors by filling glass brandishing another brewer's logo. On the flipside, a change to the law might cause brewers to capture sales from customers who would like to fill a growler, but simply cannot justify adding more glass to the collection.

Questions arise with the potential for new laws surrounding growlers. For example, one wonders how far legislature would take the concept of "re-sealable container." Could brewers be allowed to fill customers' empty soda bottles with their beer? What about the potential for completely blank growlers – would the Surgeon General's warning still be required on the glass? In any event, brewers will need to form their own policies on filling growlers to succeed in what continues to be a changing legal landscape for craft beer.

Read more about Representative Howitt's justification for growler reform and dissenting opinions in [an article published by The Boston Globe](#).