



OREGON
WINEGROWERS
ASSOCIATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 24, 2020

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Oregon wineries call on Governor to allow limited offerings, citing economic impacts from industry survey

Salem, Ore. – Oregon’s wine industry stands with Governor Brown in her concern about the rapid rise in COVID-19 cases over the last few weeks and recognizes the need for precautions to slow the spread of the virus. However, the recent “Freeze” prohibiting on-site tasting and consumption at winery tasting rooms comes at an extremely challenging time as wineries seek to get on stable footing after earlier COVID closures and the September wildfires. Tasting rooms have taken safety precautions seriously and have not been the source of COVID-19 outbreaks.

“2020 has had dire impacts for wineries, vineyards and for our employees because of COVID-19 and wildfires,” said Alex Sokol Blosser, President of the Oregon Winegrowers Association Board of Directors. “Banning tastings during the holiday season is devastating for many wineries that typically see significant wine sales during the last two months of the year. An extension of the ban will threaten the viability of some wineries and will unfortunately lead to employee layoffs.”

The Oregon Winegrowers Association and Oregon Wine Council last week shared a proposal with Governor Brown recommending she allow for limited on-site tastings at wineries that remain in the most restrictive reopening phase past Dec. 2 with additional safety protocols. At a minimum, they have asked that wineries be allowed to operate outdoors as their counterparts in Washington are currently allowed to do.

“We believe these modifications would allow wineries to ensure the safety of their guests, while also supporting tasting rooms at this critical time,” said Elin Miller, Co-Chair of the Oregon Wine Council Board of Directors. “The ability to serve guests under these strict modifications would give these wineries a lifeline during what has been an unprecedented and incredibly challenging year.”

The industry last week launched a survey that highlights the challenges wineries and their employees face if there is a prolonged prohibition of on-site tastings at wineries. That survey was completed by 71 wineries, representing roughly 14% of Oregon wine by volume and 20% by value. They reported on a total of 81 tasting rooms across Oregon, about 15% of Oregon’s 550 tasting rooms statewide. Notably, the survey found:

- Restrictions through the end of the year are expected to equal more than **\$4.5 million in lost revenue** – this is attributable to just 81 of the 550 tasting rooms in Oregon.
- **72% of respondents have already had to lay off employees** because of lost sales during the two-week Freeze impacting more than 200 Oregonians, which is reported to **rise to 85% if the Freeze continues**.
- If the restrictions remain in place through the end of the year, using figures from respondents applied statewide, up to **2,000 employees could be impacted**.

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