

Hi – I'm Dru Swann. I'm a resident of Topeka, but a Kansas native from the small town of Wellington, just south of Wichita. I went from a very slow paced life in rural Kansas to going a hundred miles an hour every day. Let me give you an example: I wake up at 4:30 a.m. to start my day so I can get my son and me ready and out the door to arrive at work in Kansas City by 8 a.m. I don't take a lunch and I typically leave the office between 5:30 and 6:00 so I can be home by 7 p.m. The few hours I have on those evenings with my husband and son are precious.

I literally have time for nothing extra. I utilize every convenience that stores have to offer such as Dillon's "Click List" and online shopping. Efficiency is everything to making my family's life work in this fast paced world. So because of the little time I have, I like to make things special. A glass of wine from a local vineyard, or an inventive cocktail copies from a Julep "mix-ologist" ... these are the things that give a little sparkle to my husband and I's otherwise ordinary days.

I know this bill may seem ominous to liquor stores and might have them believing they would lose valuable business, but here are some interesting things to consider when customer service is taken to a different level.

For instance, my 83-year-old grandmother will not set foot in a liquor store. I've never asked her why, but I believe it is just "one of those things." Perhaps it's a generational stigma, and I don't see her changing her mind anytime soon. However, she loves a good wine. If wine were available in a grocery store, she would be more apt to pick a bottle up herself that she could enjoy at home.

And why shouldn't the grocery store should be a place where someone can conveniently pick up a bottle of wine if they choose?

The liquor store is not without its purpose, even in an environment where grocers sell their products. I personally find that I learn something new every time I visit one of my favorite liquor stores here in Topeka. I value their expertise and advice and look to them to ensure I make purchases of adult beverages that I'll enjoy drinking at home. I can assure you I have no interest in asking the 21-year-old clerk at Dillon's his opinion of Rieslings. I'll ask those questions of the expert at my local liquor store. Many of my peers feel the same way.

But for you, we have some questions. As lawmakers, you've forced us to shop under these guidelines since the 1940's. Help me understand ...

Why do I have to travel from a liquor store to a grocery store and waste my valuable, limited time to make two stops to buy mixers for my drinks? We all know crossing 21st and Fairlawn is nearly impossible at certain hours and I wish I didn't have to do it because an outdated law mandates separate locations for alcohol and mixers.

And why do I have to make a separate trip to the liquor store when I need a good wine (or beer for that matter) to cook with?

I'm a mom. Do you expect me to drag my children into a liquor store with me? Personally I don't feel it's appropriate or safe.

If I'm only shopping for alcohol, do liquor store owners really think that I'm going to wait in an impossible grocery store line instead of seeking out a specialty liquor store?

I have read and heard the concerns of small business owners and I understand their plight.

However, I think those of you who vote to continue to protect these businesses underestimate me and their other customers. Just because we can shop at grocery stores doesn't mean we will stop patronizing liquor stores – like most of our decisions about where we spend our money, we'll decide largely based on customer service.

Will these liquor stores have to make more of an effort to provide top notch service? YES. Will they lose my business just because I can buy adult beverages elsewhere? No.

It's time we not let one type of business monopolize an industry in this state and allow consumers – busy moms like me – to decide how we would like to spend our money and time. I have made solid relationships with business owners and with that comes my loyalty.

Most of the men and women standing in opposition of this bill are doing a great job serving their customers and we'll continue to shop with them. They aren't going to go out of business. But we as their customers shouldn't be mandated by the government to buy from them; there are days we'd simply like to get a bottle of wine as we pick up the groceries.

So on behalf of busy moms across Kansas, I implore you to pass HB 2282.

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