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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE TAXATION OF LIQUOR.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that alcohol consumption  
2 contributes to hundreds of deaths each year in Hawaii.  
3 According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and  
4 Prevention, there was an average of three hundred eighty-four  
5 alcohol attributable deaths per year in Hawaii between 2011 to  
6 2015. Of those deaths, approximately ninety per cent were due  
7 to excessive alcohol use, which includes binge drinking, heavy  
8 drinking, and any drinking by pregnant women or people under the  
9 age of twenty-one. It is estimated that excessive alcohol use  
10 shortened the lives of those who died in Hawaii by an average of  
11 27.2 years.

12           The legislature further finds that, although it is often  
13 assumed that most excessive drinkers are alcohol dependent, one  
14 study found that ninety per cent of excessive drinkers did not  
15 meet the criteria for alcohol dependence. The most common form  
16 of excessive alcohol use is binge drinking, which is defined as  
17 consuming four or more drinks during a single occasion for women



1 and five or more drinks during a single occasion for men. Heavy  
2 drinking is defined as consuming eight or more drinks per week  
3 for women and fifteen or more drinks per week for men.

4 The legislature additionally finds that there are several  
5 short and long-term health risks associated with excessive  
6 alcohol use. The immediate health risks of excessive alcohol  
7 use may include injuries, such as motor vehicle crashes, falls,  
8 drownings, and burns; violence, including homicide, suicide,  
9 sexual assault, and intimate partner violence; alcohol  
10 poisoning; and sexual behaviors which can result in unintended  
11 pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. For pregnant women,  
12 excessive alcohol use may result in miscarriage and stillbirth  
13 and any alcohol use during pregnancy may cause fetal alcohol  
14 spectrum disorder. Over time, excessive alcohol use can cause  
15 chronic diseases and other serious problems including high blood  
16 pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, digestive  
17 problems, certain types of cancer, a weakening of the immune  
18 system, learning and memory problems, mental health problems,  
19 social problems, and alcohol use disorders or alcohol  
20 dependence.



1           In addition to the health risks associated with excessive  
2 alcohol use, the legislature notes that excessive alcohol use  
3 contributes to significant economic costs to the State,  
4 including health care, lost productivity, and criminal justice  
5 costs. According to a 2010 study, the estimated total cost of  
6 excessive alcohol use in Hawaii was \$937,400,000 or \$1.58 per  
7 drink, with the state government paying 39.4 per cent of these  
8 costs which translate to \$369,200,000 or \$0.62 per drink. One  
9 approach to influencing alcohol consumption in the State was  
10 examined in a 2022 white paper by the university of Hawai'i at  
11 Mānoa Pacific Health Analytics Collaborative. The research  
12 found that increasing the liquor tax by a mere ten cents per  
13 drink could save lives and also raise \$58,000,000 or more in tax  
14 revenue. The tax increase would also lead to a 6.9 per cent  
15 decrease in alcohol consumption among adults, seven per cent  
16 reduction in alcohol use disorders, and an increase in economic  
17 productivity by an additional \$5,900,000.

18           Correspondingly, the legislature finds that the last time  
19 the State increased the tax on liquor was in 1998. Costs have  
20 increased over the past twenty-six years and leaving the tax on  
21 liquor unchanged has had the practical effect of reducing the



1 tax. Thus, it is necessary to adjust the liquor tax to reflect  
2 the true tax rate in today's dollars. A reliable source is the  
3 United States government's Consumer Price Index, or CPI, which  
4 measures the average price changes for commonly purchased goods  
5 and services in the U.S. economy. According to the CPI, today's  
6 prices are 1.88 times as high as average prices in 1998.  
7 Alternatively, one dollar today only buys 53.156 per cent of  
8 what it could buy back in 1998. Any additional state revenue  
9 collected from the inflation adjustment in the liquor tax will  
10 be deposited into the general fund and can be used for the  
11 prevention and treatment of alcohol-related disorders such as  
12 substance use dependence, health care services, mental health  
13 services, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

14 The purpose of this Act is to adjust the liquor tax for  
15 inflation.

16 SECTION 2. Section 244D-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
17 amended by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

18 "(a) Every person who sells or uses any liquor in the  
19 State not taxable under this chapter, in respect of the  
20 transaction by which the person or the person's vendor acquired  
21 the liquor, shall pay a gallonage tax that is hereby imposed at



1 the following rates for the various liquor categories defined in  
2 section 244D-1:

3 On July 1, [~~1998~~] 2024, and thereafter, the tax rate shall  
4 be:

- 5 (1) [~~\$5.98~~] \$11.24 per wine gallon on distilled spirits;
- 6 (2) [~~\$2.12~~] \$3.98 per wine gallon on sparkling wine;
- 7 (3) [~~\$1.38~~] \$2.59 per wine gallon on still wine;
- 8 (4) [~~\$0.85~~] \$1.60 per wine gallon on cooler beverages;
- 9 (5) [~~\$0.93~~] \$1.75 per wine gallon on beer other than draft  
10 beer; and
- 11 (6) [~~\$0.54~~] \$1.01 per wine gallon on draft beer;

12 and at a proportionate rate for any other quantity so sold or  
13 used.

14 Beginning July 1, 2025, and every year thereafter, the  
15 gallonage tax that is imposed pursuant to this section for the  
16 various liquor categories shall be adjusted using the Consumer  
17 Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Honolulu, or a  
18 successor index, for the twelve months prior."

19 SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
20 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.





# S.B. NO. 3275

**Report Title:**

Taxation; Alcohol; Liquor Tax

**Description:**

Increases the liquor tax and adjusts it for future inflation.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

