Wine Dinners

The Commercial Licensing and Racing & Athletics Division of the Department of Business Regulation ("Department") has received several recent inquiries regarding "wine dinners" and whether a Class A licensee (retail liquor store) may "co-sponsor" a wine dinner with a Class B (or B-V) licensee (restaurant), without being in violation of R.I. Gen. Laws §3-7-4.1

R.I. Gen. Laws §3-7-4.1 permits any Class A licensee to conduct, at no charge to the customer, sample tastings of wine and beer that are available for purchase at the store. Wine and beer samplings cannot be conducted simultaneously, and each customer is limited to only one sample tasting of each product. Food samplings must also be provided at no charge during the tasting. In addition, all samplings must be conducted within the Class A premises, and sampling events can only be promoted on the Class A's licensed premises.

It is the position of the Department that co-sponsored wine dinners are permissible, so long as the following conditions are met:

1. A wine dinner can only be held at a licensed Class B location.

2. The Class B licensee must charge a set fee for the combined cost of the dinner and wine tasting or "pairing" with the meal.

3. The wine served by the Class B must come from its established inventory, and cannot be brought in and served by a Class A directly, or indirectly.

4. Only qualified Class B personnel can serve the wine being offered.

5. Both a Class A and Class B may advertise the wine dinner. However, the Class A must disclose that the wine dinner is being conducted by the Class B and held at its premises.

6. If a Class A representative attends the wine dinner, the representative may describe the attributes of the wine and may advise that the wines are available for purchase at the Class A's location.

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