

MEMBER ALERT

Dear Members,

The MPSA office during the past 3 days has been beset with reports that Massachusetts is banning the retail sale of alcohol beginning in April. **THIS IS A FAKE NEWS STORY STARTED ON FACEBOOK.** There is nothing true about this story.

MPSA confirmed with the Baker Administration on the evening of Monday, March 30, 2020 that there will be **no changes to the guidelines for "Essential Services."** Package stores in Massachusetts are designated as "essential services." Throughout the duration of the State of Emergency in Massachusetts off premise retailers of beer, wine and spirits are allowed to be open during approved hours as mandated under M.G.L. c. 138, Section 15.

The hoax in Massachusetts is not unique. In today's Industry Report, produced by Mark Brown, it was acknowledged that both California and Illinois had similar fake news stories creating confusion and panic. Similar to Massachusetts, they were originated on Facebook. The fact that the story was started on Facebook should have made people suspicious from the beginning. *Please see the story below which verifies the falsehood to the Facebook posts.*

Facebook posts: Says certain states are banning the sale of alcohol

Source: <https://www.politifact.com/>

By Ciara O'Rourke

March 30, 2020

No, states like Illinois and California aren't banning alcohol sales

Claims that states are banning alcohol sales appear to have originated on a prank page.

You can call off your emergency trip to the liquor store - states aren't really stopping the sale of alcohol. But recent Facebook posts would have you think otherwise.

"No beer or alcohol sales in state of Illinois as of 3pm starting Monday March, 30th," reads an image posted by one account. Then there are links to stories with headlines like this one: "NC Governor to stop all alcohol sales beginning Friday, April 3rd. Another one claims "Gov. Gavin Newsom suspends alcohol in CA as of March 28."

Some of these posts, such as one about Mississippi banning booze that has since been pulled down, appear to be screenshots of a news story. But if you click on the links in other posts, it brings you to a page that says "you got pranked."

The joke, however, is getting lost on many Facebook users as they share both these blog posts and images of seeming media stories with this tee-totaling news.

Searching for actual news stories about states banning alcohol, we found none. However, Pennsylvania, where the state runs liquor stores, has closed down all of its off-premise locations indefinitely, Forbes reports. "It remains the only part of the country where residents have such limited access to distilled spirits," the publication says.

People in Pennsylvania can still buy alcohol, however. One distillery is selling bottles from a drive-thru and shipping to folks' front doors. Another shop is selling vodka and whiskey for curbside pickup. California, meanwhile, is among the states to loosen alcohol rules for restaurants, allowing them to sell beer, wine and cocktails to go as people are preventing from dining in due to shelter-in-place orders to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

We rate these Facebook posts False.

<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/mar/30/facebook-posts/no-states-illinois-and-california-arent-banning-al/>

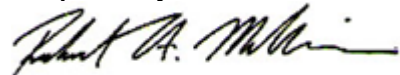
<https://www.bettergov.org/news/fact-check-no-illinois-isnt-banning-alcohol-sales-as-part-of-coronavirus-response/>

<https://www.news4jax.com/news/local/2020/03/30/fact-check-no-jacksonville-alcohol-sales-do-not-end-at-3-pm/>

<https://www.wlbt.com/2020/03/30/no-gov-tate-reeves-is-not-banning-sale-alcohol/>

Please continue to stay safe and take all reasonable precautions to protect your employees and customers.

Respectfully,



Rob Mellion
Executive Director | General Counsel