

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Blanca Rubio, Chair

AB 2751 (Alvarez) – As Amended April 16, 2026

SUBJECT: Alcoholic beverages: imports: personal or household use: reasonable amounts

SUMMARY: This bill would further authorize, but also limit, the personal or household use permitted under an existing exception in the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act by restricting any adult entering the United States as a pedestrian or in a vehicle that is not a common carrier to no more than 6 liters of alcoholic beverages every 31 days. **Specifically, this bill:**

1) Clarifies current law by stating that any adult entering the United States as a pedestrian or by a vehicle that is not a common carrier shall be restricted to no more than six liters of alcoholic beverages every 31 days.

2) Makes technical and clarifying changes.

EXISTING LAW:

1) Establishes the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) and grants it exclusive authority to administer the provisions of the ABC Act (Act) in accordance with laws enacted by the Legislature. This involves licensing individuals and businesses associated with the manufacture, importation and sale of alcoholic beverages in this state and the collection of license fees or occupation taxes for these purposes.

2) Establishes various alcoholic beverage license categories and a schedule of annual fees charged to the licensees.

3) Makes it unlawful for any person other than a licensee to sell, manufacture, or import alcoholic beverages in this state, with exceptions.

4) Imposes restrictions on the means by which alcoholic beverages are imported into the state for delivery or use within the state, as provided, and provides exceptions to these restrictions for specified amounts of alcoholic beverages brought in the state for personal or household use, as specified.

5) Provides an exception to the importation restrictions that allows an adult to bring a reasonable amount of alcoholic beverages into this state from without the United States for personal household use.

6) Restricts a California resident returning to the United States by a vehicle that is not a common carrier, or any adult entering the United States as a pedestrian, to the amount of alcoholic beverages that is exempt from the payment of duty in accordance with existing provisions of federal law.

7) Authorizes ABC to create and issue a special on-sale general license to a person who owns or operates a facility that is partially located in the County of Placer and in the County of Washoe, State of Nevada (Cal Neva Resort & Casino), subject to the following:

- a) The licensed premises is located on a single contiguous property of not less than three acres, and not more than seven acres, where the floor area structure in the County of Placer is no greater than 20% of the total area of all structures located in both counties.
- b) The facility consists of at least a restaurant, casino, conference center, and hotel.
- c) The licensed premises is operated as an integral part of the facility.
- d) The licensee shall not be transferable except from person to person.

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill is keyed fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the bill. According to the author's office, "this bill modernizes California's alcohol import laws to reflect the realities of our border communities. The bill aligns California's personal use import limits from Mexico with those of other states like Texas, allowing residents to bring back up to 6 liters of alcohol for personal consumption. These changes support cross border commerce, promote tourism, and foster the binational relationship with Mexico while maintaining public safety through clear, enforceable standards."

Background.

According to the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), an adult U.S. resident returning from a foreign country may bring one liter of alcoholic beverages duty-free as part of their personal exemption, provided that: (1) the individual is at least 21 years old; (2) the alcohol is intended strictly for personal use and not for resale; and (3) the importation does not violate the laws of the state of arrival. While federal regulations allow one liter to be brought in duty-free, travelers may bring back additional quantities of alcohol if permitted by the destination state. However, any amount exceeding the duty-free exemption may be subject to applicable Customs duties and Internal Revenue Tax (IRT).

Although federal law does not impose a strict limit on the total quantity of alcohol a person may import for personal use, bringing back unusually large amounts may raise concerns that the alcohol is intended for commercial purposes. CBP officers enforce regulations established by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and have the authority to make on-the-spot determinations regarding the purpose of the importation. If the alcohol is deemed to be for commercial use, the traveler may be required to obtain an import permit and file a formal entry before the alcohol can be released.

Under current California law, adults (21 years of age or older) who bring alcoholic beverages into California for commercial or business purposes must be licensed by the ABC. Adults who bring alcoholic beverages into California for personal or household use are not required to obtain an alcoholic beverage license; however, certain restrictions apply. The alcoholic beverages must accompany the traveler upon entry and may not be shipped separately to California at a later date.

Current law also limits the quantity of alcohol brought into California from Mexico for personal or household use as follows: 1) A pedestrian crossing the international border on foot may bring in only the amount of alcoholic beverages which are exempt from payment of duty in accordance with the existing provision of federal law (currently, this is one-liter every 31 days). This limit applies to all persons regardless of state or country of residence; 2) A California resident

crossing the international border in a vehicle that is not a common carrier may bring in only the amount of alcoholic beverages which are exempt from payment of duty in accordance with the existing provisions of federal law (currently, this is one-liter every 31 days); 3) Non-California residents crossing the international border in a vehicle that is not a common carrier can bring with them a reasonable quantity of alcoholic beverages (up to five cases or 60 liters) provided the beverages are for personal or household use; and 4) A California resident or any other person crossing the international border via common carrier may bring in a reasonable quantity of alcoholic beverages (up to five cases or 60 liters) provided the beverages are for personal or household use.

These alcoholic beverage thresholds for personal or household use are set and enforced under an agreement between ABC and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

For the purpose of current law, “common carriers” are steamship companies and railroads, or any persons who hold themselves out to the general public to transport in interstate or foreign commerce any class or classes of passengers or property, or both, for compensation by air or highway.

Other requirements and exemptions occur for new California residents, military personnel (relocating and non-relocating) and out-of-state residents traveling through California, and foreign diplomats.

AB 2751 does not alter licensing requirements, distribution rules, or commercial import restrictions. It simply clarifies personal use allowances that already exist in statute. The bill maintains all safeguards that prevent diversion into the retail market and ensures that California’s alcohol regulatory framework remains strong, transparent, and enforceable.

Committee staff comment. Committee staff notes that current law allows adults to bring small quantities of alcoholic beverages into California for personal use, but the statute relies on undefined terms such as “reasonable.” This ambiguity causes inconsistent enforcement at ports of entry and confusion among travelers. AB 2751 will modernize and clarify California’s rules governing the personal importation of alcoholic beverages from out-of-country locations. This bill does not change or expand commercial activity or weaken regulatory oversight. Instead, it establishes a clear, uniform standard that is easy for travelers to follow and straightforward for enforcement agencies to administer.

Prior legislation. AB 840 (Dahle), Chapter 355, Statutes of 2019. Allowed ABC to create and issue a special on-sale general license to a person who owns or operates a facility that is partially located in the County of Placer and partially located in the County of Washoe, State of Nevada (Cal Neva Resort & Casino), as specified.

AB 1370 (Chiu), Chapter 191, Statutes of 2019. Authorized ABC to issue a special on-sale general license to Saint Joseph’s Church in San Francisco.

AB 1217 (Santiago), Chapter 474, Statutes of 2018. Authorized ABC to issue a special on sale general license to the Hollywood Forever Cemetery.

AB 1670 (Dodd), Chapter 347, Statutes of 2016. Among other things, authorized ABC to issue a special on-sale general license to the operator of any for-profit theater located within the County of Napa (Uptown Theater).

AB 525 (Ting), Chapter 235, Statutes of 2013. Created a new special on-sale general license in the Act that enabled the operator of any for-profit theater, as specified, to serve alcoholic beverages during certain hours in specified areas of the theater.

AB 2793 (Governmental Organization Committee), Chapter 273, Statutes of 2010. Among other things, authorized a licensed winegrower to serve on the board of trustees of a nonprofit theater company operating a theater in the City of Livermore, as specified. Also, authorized the ABC to issue a club license to nonprofit lawn bowling clubs that do not discriminate or restrict membership, as specified.

AB 23 (Ma), Chapter 23, Statutes of 2008. Allowed licensees operating a cabaret theater to admit persons under 21 years of age to theater performances at any time, provided that alcoholic beverages are not sold, served, or consumed on the premises during those performances.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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