

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 917 (Laird) – As Amended March 25, 2026

Policy Committee: Governmental Organization

Vote: 19 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill allows additional licensed winegrowers to conduct tastings at a certified farmers' market (CFM).

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Repeals the requirement that a licensed winegrower permitted to sell wine at a CFM must only sell wine produced entirely from grapes grown by the licensee.
- 2) Increases, from one to three, the number of licensees allowed to conduct an instructional tasting event at a CFM and provides that such tastings are subject to the Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) training requirement.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Minor and absorbable costs to the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) for related education and enforcement.

This committee sees a wide array of bills that propose to modify the scope of alcohol laws. Taken together, these proposals could lead to significant new costs and future budget requests. In this case, however, the proposed expansion applies to a relatively small volume of licensees.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author, "This bill strengthens the California wine industry – which has faced significant challenges in recent years – by expanding opportunities for winemakers to connect with consumers at farmers markets."
- 2) **Background. *CFM Sales and Tastings.*** California's tied-house law prevents the vertical integration of the alcohol industry by keeping the manufacturer, wholesaler, and retailer separated. However, existing law allows ABC to issue a CFM sales permit to a licensed winegrower to sell wine produced and bottled entirely by the winegrower, with only grapes grown by the winegrower. This bill repeals the limitation that otherwise prohibits a winegrower that blends its wine with another winegrower's grapes from obtaining a CFM permit.

Existing law also allows a licensed winegrower to conduct instructional wine tastings for consumers at a CFM following certain requirements, including allowing only one tasting

event to occur at a time. This bill increases the limit to allow three licensees to conduct an event simultaneously and requires the alcohol server to have RBS certification.

RBS Program. AB 1221 (Gonzalez Fletcher), Chapter 847, Statutes of 2017, required ABC to develop, implement, and administer a curriculum for an RBS training program and required an alcohol server to successfully complete an RBS training course offered or authorized by ABC. The program requires an employee of a licensed premises responsible for checking identifications, taking customer orders, and pouring or delivering alcoholic beverages to have a valid RBS certification after passing an exam within 60 days of the employee's first day of employment.

- 3) **Support and Opposition.** This bill is co-sponsored by Family Winemakers of California and the California Association of Winegrape Growers, which argue, "Expanding opportunities for winemakers to reach consumers is essential to support both producers and grape growers as demand declines." This bill is also supported by other business groups and the County of Sonoma.

This bill is opposed by Alcohol Justice, which argues, "As California sees, year by year, greater and greater alcohol-related harms and attendant costs, we would like to caution against haphazard increases in alcohol sales across the state."

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