



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

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**Contact:**

Rep. Janis Ringhand (608) 266-1192

Rep. Janet Bewley (608) 266-7690

## Ringhand and Bewley Announce Legislation to Protect Craft Brewers

MADISON – Rep. Janis Ringhand (D-Evansville) and Rep. Janet Bewley (D-Ashland) began circulating legislation today that would exempt craft breweries from the harmful beer distribution changes made in the 2011-13 state budget. Strong opposition from consumers and small businesses throughout the state prompted their swift action.

“Craft brewing is a growing industry in Wisconsin and they are putting communities across Wisconsin on the map. We should be supporting the entrepreneurs and small business owners that are helping re-build our economy,” Ringhand said. “They have made it clear that the new regulations hurt competition, limit trade and discourage investment. If Wisconsin is truly open for business, we will protect craft brewers from these damaging new laws.”

Added to the budget by the Joint Committee on Finance, the new beer distribution model restricts small brewers’ ability to get critical wholesale licenses and limits where and how they distribute their products. The Ringhand-Bewley proposal would exempt craft brewers that manufacture less than 300,000 barrels per year from this new model. It is endorsed by the Wisconsin Craft Brewers Guild.

“We should be concentrating on helping small businesses and finding ways to keep our neighbors on Main Street up and running,” Bewley said. “Northern Wisconsin has been hit particularly hard by the economic downturn. Now is not the time to be turning our backs on the small businesses that do so much for our local communities.”

Despite a great partisan divide on the overall budget, there was significant bipartisan cooperation in attempting to defeat the beer distribution model changes. Ringhand and Bewley are optimistic that both sides will once again be able to come together, stand up for Wisconsin’s small businesses and support their proposed legislation.

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