

Gary Horton: Scott Wilk boozy bill hiccup

By Gary Horton Full Speed to Port!

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We think Assemblyman Scott Wilk, R-Santa Clarita, may have been tainted with the Devil's Brew.

No, we didn't catch a woozy Wilk wandering the Granary Square parking lot at 3 a.m. Scott is a disciplined man who's built a disciplined life.

Wilk, with Assemblyman Tom Daly, decided they needed to lubricate the wheels of government into solving a problem that didn't previously exist.

Together the Booze Brothers decided that what you and I really need right now is a good, stiff drink. At nearly any time, and in 42,000 more places than you could ever tip one over before.

Sounds inebriated, doesn't it? Yes, but with AB 1322, Daly and Wilk seek to empower beauty salons, day spas and barbershops to serve beer, wine, champagne and the sort.

No longer will you need to sit bored through your dull haircut – you can throw one back, shake it loose, and really get your groove on.

The bill solves a “problem” that Wilk/Daly essentially invented. In the name of “freedom” — Scott's own words to me — alcohol consumption will now be “normalized” into the course of our everyday lives, just as natural as eating Cheerios for breakfast.

The bill allows salons, spas, barber shops and the like to provide guests with one drink — no more — of beer or wine or equal, provided they don't charge for serving up the buzz. No liquor license required. Just “Come right in, sit right down, daddy let your hair hang down. ...”

Something's fuzzy here. Scott says the bill is about expanding our freedoms. That we're all adult and if we want a drink here or there or while cutting our hair — so what? It's a free country.

What could possibly go wrong with serving up booze whilst a straight razor tenderly caresses our neck? Ummm. Well, maybe with 42,000 salons serving up drinks, quite a few of them will “top off the glass” once or twice and we'll have 100,000 more drivers under the influence, influencing our lives with unnecessary accidents, mayhem and death.

Ummm, with kids in tow, Mom can settle back and throw one (or two, if no one is looking) back and hey, the kids will learn the gig, and in one more generation we'll have even more liver and kidney problems to pay for with our medical premiums.

Ummm. Well, many of these places provide personal services behind closed doors. I'm not saying, but with lubed-up clientele, every now and again, we might see behaviors requiring increased cops at the doors.

Maybe I'm overreacting. Maybe you can't get all the Mormon out of the fallen Mormon boy. But maybe I'm protective of our kids and our automobile passengers, and of reasonable public social conduct.

Maybe I think it's strange that two full aisles at the supermarket are now dedicated to alcohol and a generation ago all that stuff was stuck in a remote corner of the store.

No, I'm not overreacting. We certainly don't need to be a nanny state, and I'm all for the idea of expanded personal freedoms.

But in the case of introducing alcohol into settings which for decades have thrived perfectly well without, why push booze further into our lives? It's already almost everywhere.

So why are Wilk and Daly with their alcohol and salon lobbyists pushing for legalized alcohol consumption in our personal service salons?

Follow the money, honey. Booze is good for business.

How can salons induce you to linger and more often loosen your wallet? How can the booze industry even further expand markets?

Easy: When serving free alcohol at your local salon, said salon becomes your local Cheers bar, but with sharp scissors everywhere. Many might feel this might just be fun. So it should be legal, right?

But all this is a problem we never knew of before as we've gotten along just swimmingly for decades without hair salons operating as mini-bars. Let's be honest — this isn't about "freedom," it's about profits.

So, Scott, why stop at salons? Why not push sample drinks at our local Ralphs? Wet your whiskers at the dry cleaners? How about soaking up suds at the car wash? The possibilities for alcohol expansion are limitless.

Scott, (I know you're reading) there are far more pressing issues that, if pursued diligently by government, would drastically improve our lives for measurable good. Please, Scott, fix our freeways and solve our social justice problems. Instead, Scott, your AB 1322 offers us up a quick buzz in the name of "personal freedom" while opening the door for the serious consequences of abuse, accidents, unwanted influence of minors and potential bad behavior.

Why risk these substantial social negatives for the expansion of liquor and salon profits under the guise of the personal pleasure of a drink?

Readers, if you think AB 1322 is as hot a drunken mess as I do, please take action. Query "Alcohol Justice AB1322" and go to the "take action" page. Call Scott and tell him to rescind.

Or write Gov. Jerry Brown. He seems to be the "Grownup in the Room" these days.

Scott Wilk generally gets it right. This time, however, he gets a GUI — "governing under the influence," as business and alcohol interests slipped him a mickey to put their profits ahead of public safety.

Scott got it wrong. But you can make it right. Take action now.

Gary Horton is a Santa Clarita resident. "Full Speed to Port!" appears Wednesdays in The Signal.