

WET/DRY ELECTION

Sevier County Sale and Manufacture of Alcoholic Beverages Election

ELECTION DATE: Tuesday, November 3, 2020

What is being proposed?

Sevier County voters have proposed legalizing the sale and manufacture of alcoholic beverages in Sevier County, subject to regulation and issuance of permits by the Alcoholic Beverage Control Division and Arkansas law.

When is the election?

The election is Nov. 3, 2020. Early voting starts Oct. 19, 2020 at the De Queen Community Building at 718 N. Maple St. in De Queen.

Sevier County voters can check their voter status or find out where they're supposed to vote on Election Day by calling the Sevier County Clerk's Office at (870)642-2852. You can also check your voter registration status online at www.voterview.ar-nova.org

Why is this issue on the ballot?

Sevier County is currently a dry county, meaning that alcohol may not be manufactured or sold in the county without a vote of the people. Using the citizen initiative process allowed under state law, citizens making up the Vote for Growth in Sevier County Committee collected signatures from registered voters in Sevier County to place this local option proposal on the ballot. On Aug. 7, 2020, the Sevier County Clerk's Office certified that this proposal qualified for the November 2020 ballot.

QUICK LOOK: What does your vote mean?

Local Option Question:

FOR: A FOR vote on the local option question means you are in favor of changing the county's status from dry to wet, which would allow for the sale and manufacturing of alcohol to take place in Sevier County.

AGAINST: An AGAINST vote on the local option question means you are in favor of keeping the county's dry status, so that the sale and manufacturing of alcohol in Sevier County would continue to be prohibited.

Exercising your voting privilege:

We live in a democratic society where voting is a privilege of citizenship. Democracy works best when informed citizens exercise their voting privilege. **Election Day for this issue is Nov. 3, 2020. Early voting begins Oct. 19, 2020. Please exercise your right to vote on this issue.**

PUBLIC POLICY CENTER

UofA DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

The following statements are examples of what supporters and opponents have made public either in media statements, campaign literature, on websites or interviews with Public Policy Center staff. The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture does not endorse or validate these statements.

What do supporters say?

- Economic growth for this community is the main objective of the group, for becoming a wet county. Legal retail alcohol sales are a sign of a contemporary, economic development advancement, which is important for attracting investors within a community.
- Sales of distilled spirits and other alcoholic beverages are a sizeable source of economic activity, including revenue and jobs. Currently, Sevier County is losing significant income in package store sales, recreational activities, hotel accommodations, restaurant sales, and the tourism industry. This increased revenue stream would be beneficial to our local businesses as well as contributing to the growth of the community. We want to keep the revenue and taxes in Sevier County.
- Legalizing the manufacture and sale of alcohol will increase tax revenue to provide needed services in Sevier County. This revenue can be allocated to benefit hospitals, law enforcement, roads, schools, drug enforcement, and rehab facilities.
- Being dry is a deterrent to most prospective new residents as well as prospective employers and investors. In particular, having the legal sale of alcohol will make it more feasible and economically attractive to open and operate restaurants in the county. Having more restaurants has been identified as a key revitalization factor to help ease the flow of diners to Oklahoma, Mena, Ashdown, Texarkana and Hot Springs. This creates more economic opportunities locally.
- Under the current dry county law, full-service restaurants may choose not to locate in Sevier County because of the added expense involved from having a private club license in order to serve alcohol. Restaurants with the private club license have to purchase liquor at higher costs from retailers in other wet counties as opposed to purchasing at wholesale prices directly from distributors.

What do opponents say?

- De Queen needs to grow with industry coming in but alcohol is not the answer.
- Any added taxes received from the sale of alcohol will be quickly used in addressing the additional problems caused by the presence and sale of alcohol and more taxes very likely needed.
- Convenience and money are not the only things to consider. Alcohol contributes to so many things from abuse, DUI, deaths, fetal alcohol syndrome, crime, just to name a few.
- I haven't seen very many people who were attracted to a venue by tourism that would leave the place they were attracted to because they couldn't get a drink after dinner. Most who know it's unavailable drink what's available. Sevier County is a beautiful place to vacation. The lakes, rivers, and streams available along with sporting events aren't going to be more attractive with Alcoholic Beverage signs attached to it.
- The petition that was presented for signatures for this motion to be added on the ballot was not totally forthcoming. We also feel not only was the information that was presented in this petition inaccurate, it was misleading in its verbiage. Citizens were asked to sign the petition as if they were deciding for Sevier County to be a wet or dry county. While in fact, the county is already dry and presenting it in that manner, they were able to secure the signatures need to put it on the ballot. It was unnecessary to persuade citizens to sign the petition in order to secure the opportunity to make a decision for Sevier County to be a dry county as that decision has already been voted on and decided. In truth they were securing signatures for it to be on the ballot for Sevier County to become a wet county.

What is a “wet” county?

A “wet” county is one where the making and selling of alcohol is allowed. However, the majority of Arkansas’ “wet” counties do have areas where alcohol sales are prohibited.

What is a “dry” county?

A “dry” county is where voters have decided that the making and selling of alcohol is not allowed. However, some “dry” counties have restaurants that sell alcohol. State law allows alcohol to be sold for onsite consumption at certain businesses and nonprofit clubs, or “private clubs,” that exist for a purpose other than just selling alcohol.

What is the wet-dry status of Sevier County?

As per the definition of a “dry” county, there are no breweries or package liquor stores in the county. Currently there is one establishment in Sevier County that has a private club license for the sale of alcohol for onsite consumption.

If voters in Sevier County pass this issue, a maximum of three retail sales licenses in addition to onsite consumption licenses would be allowed. The number of retail sales licenses allowed is based on population, one retail license for every 5,000 people. Each application for a retail sales license would need to be approved by the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission.

There are no limits on the number of restaurants that can serve alcohol for onsite consumption if they meet requirements and are issued licenses by Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission.

How much tax revenue would alcohol sales generate?

To our knowledge, no study has been conducted to estimate the potential revenue that would be generated from alcohol sales in Sevier County.

As of July 2020, Sevier County has the second highest county sales tax rate in the state at 3.125%. De Queen, Gillham, Horatio and Lockesburg also have city sales taxes ranging from 0.75% in Lockesburg to 1.0% in De Queen and Horatio and 2% in Gillham.

What services the additional tax revenue would support depends on the current allocation of county and city sales tax revenue. For example, the majority of the county’s sales tax revenue is dedicated to specific purposes such as the county hospital, solid

waste operations, jail maintenance and operation, and the community college. The county also has a 1% sales tax that is shared between the county and area cities.

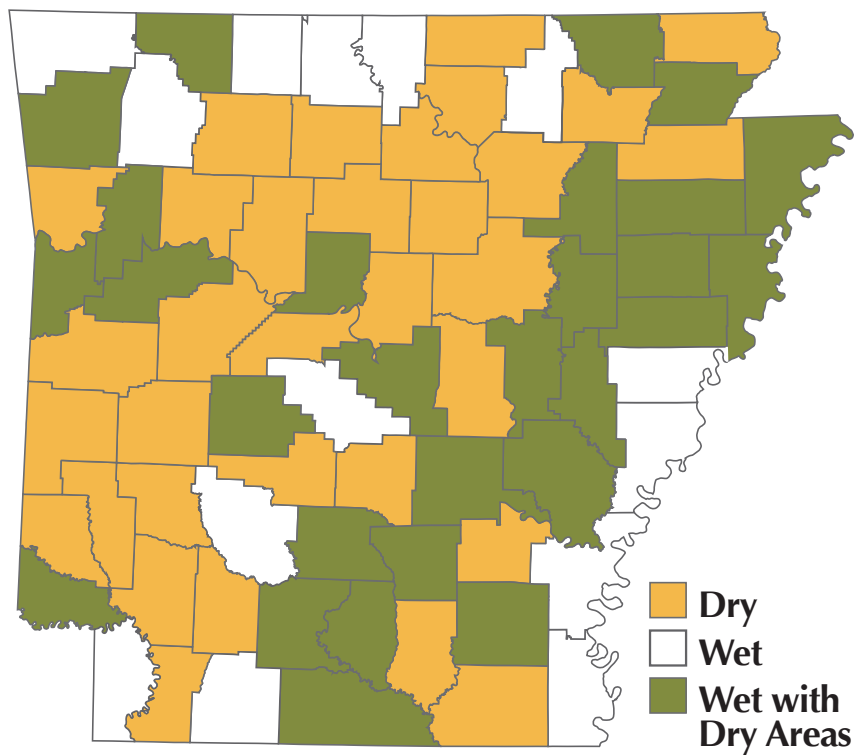
In addition to receiving some of the revenue from the 1% county sales tax for general operations, cities and towns would also receive additional sales tax revenue if some of the new retail stores and onsite consumption restaurants are located in their community.

What is the wet-dry status of other counties in Arkansas?

State law in Arkansas allows local governments to pass laws governing the sale of alcohol in their area. The result is a patchwork of areas that allow, limit or prohibit the sale of alcohol. In order to qualify a local option proposal for the ballot, ballot issue groups must collect signatures from 38% of the registered voters in the county.

As of September 2020, 42 of Arkansas’ 75 counties allowed sales of alcohol. The remaining are dry counties and do not permit the sale or manufacture of alcohol. According to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Division, many wet counties have dry areas within their borders, such as townships or cities.

Arkansas Local Option Status



Source: Alcoholic Beverage Control. Unofficial Local Option Status. Accessed Sept. 16, 2020 at www.dfa.arkansas.gov/alcoholic-beverage-control/abc-rules-and-regulations/unofficial-local-option-election-status

The following is the official wording for the local option question as it will appear on the ballot.

**LOCAL OPTION QUESTION (WET/DRY
QUESTION)**

Vote for or Against the question by placing an appropriate mark

- FOR the Manufacture or Sale of Intoxicating Liquors
- AGAINST the Manufacture or Sale of Intoxicating Liquors

Conflict of interest: This fact sheet was prepared to provide the citizens of Sevier County with information to help them in making an informed choice on Election Day. An effort has been made to ensure the information is presented in a fair and balanced way that best represents the facts associated with this ballot issue. As part of this effort, we are obligated to divulge potential conflict of interest and to recognize their influence on the educational programs and matter we produce. The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and Sevier County Cooperative Extension Service are partially funded by state and county general funds. As such, any laws affecting revenues of the state or county has the potential to affect the Sevier County Extension Office.