
COMPARATIVE FACTS
WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

Comparative Facts 86-1

February 1986

BAR CLOSING HOURS IN WISCONSIN AND SURROUNDING STATES

Wisconsin Legislation

Currently, most bars in Wisconsin must close between 1 a.m. and 8 a.m. During the summer, when daylight savings time is in effect, bars may remain open until 2 a.m., and on January 1 they may stay open until 3 a.m. Sections 125.32 and 125.68, Wisconsin Statutes, which set these hours, also allow municipalities to establish more restrictive closing hours if they wish. Bars in Milwaukee, however, are treated differently from those in the rest of the state. They must close between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. on weekdays and between 3:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. on Sundays and on holidays which fall on Monday. Milwaukee bars do not have to close at all on January 1.

1985 Senate Bill 430 and Assembly Bill 669 have proposed changes in Wisconsin's bar-closing times. As originally introduced by Senator Adelman and others, SB-430 would have required all bars, including Milwaukee bars, to close at 1 a.m. and not reopen until 8 a.m. except on January 1, when they could remain open until 3 a.m. No local option was allowed. The bill was reported out of the Senate Committee on Labor, Business, Veterans' Affairs and Insurance in the form of Senate Substitute Amendment 1. Senate Substitute Amendment 1 returns the 2 a.m. to 8 a.m. closing hours during daylight savings time, and retains the other features of the original bill. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Finance on February 11.

AB-669 was introduced by Representative Hephner and others. It would have required bars outside Milwaukee to close between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. except on January 1, when they could remain open until 3 a.m. Municipalities could not establish different hours. Milwaukee was not affected by the bill. As adopted by the Assembly (AB-669 as amended by Assembly Amendment 1 and Assembly Amendments 3 and 4 to Assembly Amendment 1), the bill sets a uniform closing time of 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. throughout the state, including Milwaukee. It does not allow local option. Bars could stay open all night on January 1. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Labor, Business, Veterans' Affairs and Insurance on February 13, 1986.

Bar Hours in Surrounding States

The states surrounding Wisconsin have bar-closing hours that differ from Wisconsin's and from each other. Their hours are as follows:

IOWA

2 a.m. to 6 a.m. except Sunday, when bars may not open until 10 a.m. and must close at midnight.

Same hours on January 1.

No local option.

MICHIGAN

2 a.m. to 7 a.m. except Sunday, when bars may not open until noon.
4 a.m. on January 1.
No local option.

MINNESOTA

1 a.m. to 8 a.m. except Sunday, when bars may not open until 10 a.m. and must close at midnight. Bars which serve 3.2% beer may serve between noon and 1 a.m. on Sundays.

Same hours on January 1.

Localities may adopt more restrictive closing hours.

ILLINOIS

No statewide closing hours. Each locality may adopt whatever closing hours it wishes.