

To-go cocktails would have to travel in the trunk under new bills

By JARED STRONG
IOWA CAPITAL DISPATCH

Margaritas and other mixed, alcohol-containing drinks that were first allowed as to-go orders from restaurants and bars in the early throes of the coronavirus pandemic in Iowa might be relegated to vehicle trunks.

Currently, those drinks are not considered open containers of alcohol and can be transported in vehicles within reach of drivers. Two bills in the Iowa House and Senate would reverse that and make drivers liable for open containers if police found even a sealed to-go cocktail within reach.

The current law was meant to boost the revenue of businesses that suffered mightily from the pandemic, when in-person dining largely ceased and to-go orders and deliveries became the norm. Iowa was the first state legislature to codify such a provision after numerous state governors enacted them on a temporary basis.

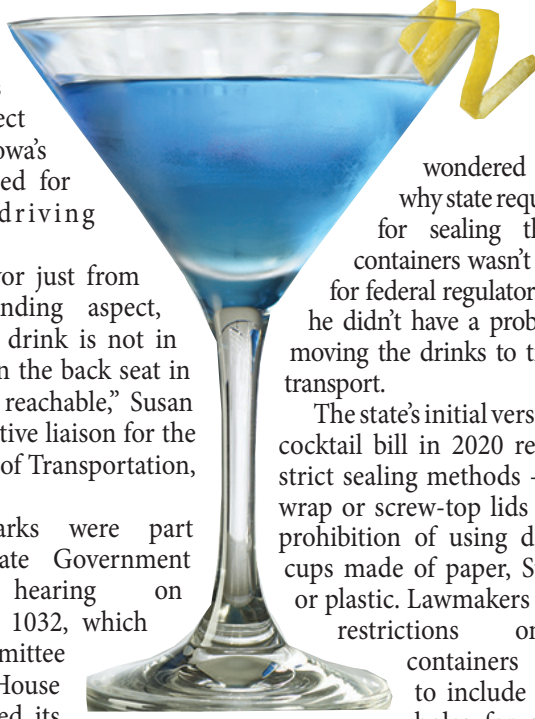
The problem is that the federal government is threatening to withhold about \$14 million of annual funding for roads and bridges because of that provision. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration imposes a "transfer penalty" for states

that don't have compliant Open Container Laws and would redirect 2.5 percent of Iowa's funding to be used for anti-drunken-driving initiatives.

"We are in favor just from the highway funding aspect, and also that the drink is not in the front seat or in the back seat in the car where it's reachable," Susan Fenton, the legislative liaison for the Iowa Department of Transportation, said Thursday.

Fenton's remarks were part of a Senate State Government subcommittee hearing on Senate Study Bill 1032, which the subcommittee advanced. A House committee canceled its Thursday hearing on the identical House Study Bill 29.

"I'm happy to move it out today, as is, with the understanding that there's more conversation here and we'll discuss it further," said Sen. Dan Dawson, R-Council Bluffs, a special agent of the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation who led the Senate hearing.



Dawson wondered aloud why state requirements for sealing the to-go containers wasn't sufficient for federal regulators but said he didn't have a problem with moving the drinks to trunks for transport.

The state's initial version of the cocktail bill in 2020 resulted in strict sealing methods — shrink wrap or screw-top lids — and a prohibition of using disposable cups made of paper, Styrofoam or plastic. Lawmakers loosened restrictions on the containers in 2021 to include lids with holes for straws or for drinking straight from the container, which federal officials said was unacceptable, according to an Alcoholic Beverages Division memo.

The currently proposed legislation would allow restaurants and bars more leeway with the to-go containers they use without flouting Open Container requirements.

Debt

CONTINUED | FROM A1

or mandatory programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

The stalemate could have significant impacts on the global economy, financial markets and the nation's credit rating the longer it goes.

If disagreements about how to address the debt limit last too long, the Treasury Department will exhaust extraordinary measures and the nation would default on the debt for the first time.

Manchin gets involved

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Wednesday during the daily briefing that the Biden administration is "just not going to negotiate" on the debt ceiling, especially since Republicans voted three times to suspend it during the Trump administration.

"So it is essential for Congress to recognize that dealing with the debt ceiling is their constitutional responsibility," Jean-Pierre said. "This is an easy one. This is something that should be happening without conditions."

West Virginia Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin III, however, is pressing the White House and congressional leaders to begin negotiations, saying during an interview on Fox Business that he's already spoken to McCarthy about the issue.

Manchin noted that Congress could put in place another committee to look at ways to address the rising national debt, though he said lawmakers would hold the line on Social Security.

"We're not getting rid of anything, and you can't scare the bejesus out of people saying we're going to get rid of Social Security, we're going to privatize. That's not going to happen," Manchin said from the World Economic Forum winter meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

"But we should be able to solidify it, so the people who have worked and earned it know they're going to get it."

Debt limit reached

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen wrote to Congress last week to inform members the United States would reach its \$31.385 trillion borrowing limit Jan. 19.

She wrote to lawmakers again Thursday, telling them the country had in fact reached its debt limit and she had begun using some of the extraordinary measures to keep paying all of the country's bills in full and on time.

The accounting maneuvers will likely last until at least early June, but Yellen continued pressing Congress on Thursday to get a deal together sooner rather than later.

"As I stated in my January 13 letter, the period of time that extraordinary measures may last is subject to considerable uncertainty, including the challenges of forecasting the payments and receipts of the U.S. Government months into the future," Yellen wrote. "I respectfully urge Congress to act promptly to protect the full faith and credit of the United States."

McCarthy made several concessions to the more right-leaning members of his party in exchange for many of them voting present so that he could become speaker with fewer than 218 votes, a majority of the 435-member House.

Among those was

not agreeing to a debt limit increase without a budget agreement or "commensurate fiscal reforms."

McCarthy also agreed to several changes to both discretionary programs, which are funded annually through the appropriations process, and mandatory programs, which essentially run on autopilot.

He promised to lower discretionary spending for federal agencies by at least \$130 billion in order to go back to fiscal 2022 levels as well as working toward "reforms to" the budget process and mandatory spending programs. Such programs include Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

'Ticking time bomb'

Pennsylvania Democratic Rep. Brendan Boyle, ranking member on the House Budget Committee, said in a written statement Thursday that "the debt ceiling is officially a ticking time bomb we can't diffuse soon enough."

Boyle added; "The fact that Republicans are ready and willing to unleash an economic doomsday in their quest to cut Social Security, Medicare, and other vital programs shows just how untethered from reality, and uninterested in governing, the extreme MAGA Republican party has become."

House Budget Chairman Jodey Arrington, a Texas Republican, wrote on Twitter that "the last thing we need to do is give Biden and the Democrats a new credit card."

"We will pay our debts, but we will not enable politicians to bankrupt our country."

100th

CONTINUED | FROM A1

"Prior to her divorce she was a hardworking mother and wife, volunteering at hospitals, churches, and as a den mother in cub scouting," Mark Keefer wrote as part of his mother's birthday party announcement. "After the divorce, she worked in Waterloo at Sears, Ramada Inn, Cedar Falls School System, Schultz Mfg., and her deepest joy — Hawkeye Valley Area Agency on Aging."

Keefer's work at the agency on aging brought her particular joy, Mark said, because she was able to help people find meaning in their lives through employment.

About 14 years ago, she moved to Traer to be near Mark and his family. She still lives on her own in an independent living apartment and remains active as ever visiting the library three times a week for strength-training classes geared toward older adults.

She also continues to enjoy life, something her family members see as key to both her longevity and good health.

"Strong coffee in the

morning, scotch and water in the afternoon," Mark said with a laugh when describing his mother's 'secret' to life. "And if she has nothing better to do, she makes banana bread. She also loves vegetables."

Keefer's granddaughter Abigail Keefer also cites her grandmother's love of the outdoors as part of the reason behind her ability to stay young at heart all these years.

"Yes, always a happy grandma," Abigail said. "Wed go on trips with her to Michigan ... she had a cabin [in Iowa] where wed fish ... She cleaned the fish."

Abigail said her grandma would also hunt pheasant.

As Keefer gave out hug after hug to party guests on Sunday, she marveled to many at how incredible it was to live a century while also admitting it happened in a flash.

"Those years sure crept up on me and I just don't know (how)," she said to a party guest as one of her nine great-grandchildren zoomed past her legs. "I keep wondering, who else is going to show up from my past!"

After 100 years, her joy lights up the lives of many more than just her own.

Ukrainians

CONTINUED | FROM A1

family of three hopes to stay longer. The place they used to call home practically no longer exists, dashed to pieces by Russian bombs, missiles, and bullets.

While the family may miss the life they used to have in Mariupol, they don't foresee being able to come back to what little is left of their hometown. They said that they hope to find jobs in the area, and they want to contribute to American society in any way they can. In addition, they hope to place their son in a local preschool and allow him to grow up in Iowa.

So far, Marina and Roman indicated their

biggest challenge faced in the United States is overcoming the language barrier, a familiar obstacle for many who have found their way to the country.

But as the two attest, despite this communicative hurdle, the family has found a warm, embracing community where they can't wait to restart their lives.

"[We] are extremely thankful for the help from people here. They're extremely welcoming, and it's just heartwarming how people are welcoming," the Stenkins said. "It would be much harder for us if we came to a different country and nobody would be willing to help and nobody would want to help."

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Eastern Iowa man shoots, kills armed intruder

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONTICELLO — An eastern Iowa man shot and killed an armed man who broke out a basement window and entered his home, authorities said Thursday.

Monticello police were called early Wednesday morning to a home where a man later identified as Patrick O'Brine was found dead, Jones County Attorney Kristofer Lyons said in a statement.

Police said O'Brine broke out a window and entered the basement of a home. A resident, who was home with his 10-year-old son, saw O'Brine and fired three shots at the intruder, hitting him twice.

O'Brine, who was armed and wearing a mask, died at the home.

Lyons said an investigation of the shooting is ongoing.

Correction

At Tuesday night's Marshalltown school board meeting, board members were presented with a draft calendar and voted to set a public hearing at the Feb. 6 meeting indicating their intent to vote and/or approve the calendar at that meeting. They did not approve the calendar on Tuesday.

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