

State should allow alcohol at UI tailgating events this fall

Devin Rokyta/Moscow-Pullman Daily News Editorial Board

For many Vandal fans, the best part about Saturdays and University of Idaho football games during the fall often takes place prior to the action inside of the Kibbie Dome.

Every home weekend, fans, students and alumni pack the parking lots west of the dome to tailgate and enjoy food fresh off the grill and some ice-cold beers. Win or lose, everyone has a good time.

Tailgating this season, however, could be much less interesting - and the Vandals' matchups with the likes of University of South Alabama and Troy could become much less bearable - after the Idaho State Board of Education informed UI officials earlier this month that, per state law, alcohol is not permitted in the university-owned parking lots.

The UI, it turns out, has been breaking state rules that ban alcohol consumption on campus grounds since a policy revision in 2011 that required schools to request permission for exceptions to the rule on a year-to-year basis. The UI has never made such a request and instead says it designates the lots as private on game days.

"We close the lot to the general public," UI spokeswoman Jodi Walker said. "To use the lot, you have to buy a special game-day parking ticket. It's private in the sense that it's not open to the general public."

The state board - and the editorial board - isn't buying the UI's workaround.

"They can tailgate all they want, they just can't have alcohol," SBOE President Emma Atchley said.

The UI, of course, will - and should - ask for permission during a meeting in August to allow alcohol in the lots, but whether the board will approve the request remains to be seen. You would think the request would be rubber stamped, but the board hasn't been receptive to alcohol on campus, recently denying the UI permission to serve alcohol at the Fan Zone for a second season. Some board members expressed concern about drinking on campus, unless you were rich enough to buy certain high-priced season tickets that give you special privileges.

If the board rejects the request in August, its decision will only push the tailgating off campus, meaning more people will be driving to games with a few drinks in their bellies. That's not a good recipe.