

House panel approves powdered alcohol bill; will be amended

By KATHRYN HAAKE, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A bill that would prohibit powdered alcohol in the state is headed to the Idaho House, but it will likely face changes before lawmakers get another chance to vote on it.

Idaho State Liquor Division Director Jeff Anderson told the House State Affairs Committee on Thursday that powdered alcohol is prone to abuse by minors and is easily hidden under clothes. So far, 27 states have already prohibited the substance, marketed as Palcohol, he said. Several more states are considering its prohibition this year, including Idaho.

The ban prohibits the use, sale and possession of powdered alcohol, and Anderson said the measure is supported by law enforcement, the alcohol industry and educators.

"While this is in powdered form, it's intended to be mixed," Anderson said. "It's just another vehicle, or vessel that can deliver alcohol in a form that is different than the kind you buy in a bottle."

The legislative panel unanimously sent the bill, HB 331, to the House floor to be amended after several committee members expressed their concern about the measure, pointing out incorrect language of the bill that asserted the substance could be snorted.

Rep. Gayle Batt, R-Wilder, argued against the ban, contending the Legislature shouldn't start regulating a product that isn't on the market yet. She also pointed to apparent flaws in the argument for prohibiting the substance because it can be concealed or mixed.

"Well, I don't think we should outlaw Everclear because we could mix it with Jell-O and make Jell-O shots," she said.

Wayne Hoffman, with the Idaho Freedom Foundation, said he's concerned about over-regulation. The state is concerned about revenue, not temperance, he argued.

"We would hope that cooler heads would prevail when it comes to these kinds of things and you realize that the hallmark of conservative governance is that you don't pass unnecessary legislation," he said.

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