

# Open booze containers on Atlantic City Boardwalk could be legal soon

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ATLANTIC CITY — Imagine walking down the Boardwalk on Memorial Day weekend with an ice cold beer or a cocktail in a red Solo cup, without worrying about breaking the law.

It could happen under recently proposed legislation that would allow alcoholic beverages to be consumed openly in Atlantic City's Tourism District. The bipartisan bill was introduced in the state Senate on March 4 and referred to the Law and Public Safety Committee. A companion bill is expected to be introduced in the Assembly next month.

City Council voted in favor of a nonbinding resolution supporting open containers in the Tourism District in March 2018. The Atlantic City Police Department also expressed support for the proposal.

Tom Forkin, chairman of Atlantic City Alcohol Beverage Control, said he has been pushing the idea of permitting open containers for several years. Forkin said he would like to see the law passed and enacted by Memorial Day so Atlantic City can capitalize on the tourist season.

"This is a win-win for the city, bringing it on par with similar open-container laws in New Orleans, Las Vegas, Nashville and Key West, to name a few," said Forkin. "This is a home run for Atlantic City."

State Sen. Chris Brown, R-Atlantic, is a co-sponsor of the bill, along with Sens. Bob Andrzejczak, D-Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic, and James Beach, D-Burlington, Camden.

Brown said the recent push came from a recommendation by the Economic Revitalization Advisory Committee, which felt the amenity would encourage patrons to more easily circulate from one beach or Boardwalk bar to another.

"We constantly have to look for new ways to enhance visitors' experience while ensuring the public's safety, which is why, following the advice of our local Police Department, tourism experts and local business owners who all agree, allowing responsible visitors to enjoy a drink as they take in the sights and sounds along the Boardwalk will foster a more vibrant atmosphere, providing another reason for tourists to spend more time and more money at our local businesses," said Brown.

Assemblymen Vince Mazzeo and John Armato, both D-Atlantic, will introduce a similar bill, possibly as soon as May 13.

"This has been long talked about, and it's time," said Armato. "We have to look at this as an economic opportunity, as a new draw to the Atlantic City Boardwalk."

Mazzeo said the proposal was another way to appeal to millennials coming to Atlantic City.

“We have to not only look at diversifying our economy but also diversifying our tourism appeal to the next generation,” he said. “As the Orange Loop (Tennessee Avenue, New York Avenue and St. James Place) develops, this could be a key aspect in encouraging tourists to step off the Boardwalk, breathing life into the actual city, into small businesses.”

The bill would require the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, which has land-use and zoning jurisdiction over the Atlantic City Tourism District, to adopt a resolution reflecting the new open-container law. CRDA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.