

Antes, Christopher

From: Diana Nolting <bdnolting@hughes.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 4:30 PM
To: ATC-Rules
Subject: Re-enacting Rule 32.1 (Group Purchasing Agreements)

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To: Indiana Alcohol, Tobacco Commission

From: Bruce Nolting - Agent for Flagpole Co-op

Subject: Re-enacting Rule 32.1

First, please allow me to express my appreciation to the Commission for taking the time to listen to the comments shared during the meeting on March 12th. Hopefully it provided each of you a better understanding of the real value Rule 32.1 provides to the individual store owners.

The Flagpole Co-op currently consists of 21 stores with 18 independent owners spread throughout the southeast portion of our state. I personally own just one store (Busy Bee Liquors) located in Seymour, Indiana. I have owned the store for over 26 years, been a member of the same co-op for over 20 years and the Agent for 9 years. Over the course of my participation in the co-op, I have developed both personal and professional relationships with many of the store owners. We tend to watch out for each others' best interest as we share common goals in a highly competitive marketplace. Trying to compete with Walmart, Cosco, CVS, Kroger and many other big box stores would be impossible without the benefits of being in a co-op. That said, even with the benefit of higher volume purchases, our deal levels and wholesalers pricing levels are no where near those of the big box stores. By grouping our purchases it allows us to be in the ball park and provide our local customers the opportunity to support locally owned and operated package stores.

To my recollection, our co-op has purchased only liquor and wine as a group with beer and other malt beverages being directly shipped to each of our locations. The deal levels offered by the wholesalers/distributors on those items allow individual stores to purchase the product at a competitive price. When comparing the best level pricing offered by beer distributors to the retail pricing of the big box stores it is obvious that these products are used to draw customers to their stores in hopes the shopper will purchase other items. Many, if not all, of the big box stores I listed sell beer below or a few pennies above cost. This becomes a huge disadvantage to the small retailers who depend on the those same items to make a living. Our primary business is to sell alcohol (beer, wine, spirits), not thousands of other items as the big box stores do.

Lastly, during the last 20 plus years I can not recall one instance when someone was injured or a theft occurred during the process of unloading a co-op delivery. The majority of the time members arrive on time to deliver truck-to-truck, leaving little room for error or theft.

Again, thank you for your time and understanding of the value Rule 32-1 provides to many small business owners throughout our great state.

Respectfully,

Bruce Nolting