



## New law could allow diverse beer creations

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Olde Main Brewing Co., 316 Main St., is helping push for a change in Iowa's definition of beer.

Currently, beer that is more than 5 percent alcohol by weight — or 6.2 percent alcohol by volume — is classified as liquor.

"It has to go through the state liquor board," said Jeff Irvin, head brewer at Olde Main.

Because of the definition, breweries like Olde Main aren't allowed to produce beers with alcohol above that mark, such as imperial pilsners, imperial stouts, barley wines and double bocks.

However, out-of-state breweries can export these beers to Iowa and sell them — a market from which Iowa's breweries are excluded.

"Legally I'm not allowed to produce it, and that puts us at an economic disadvantage," Irvin said.

SF 2091, introduced to the Iowa Senate last Tuesday, would allow breweries to create and sell beer up to 12 percent alcohol by weight.

"If it gets passed, it allows us to brew 30 percent of the beer styles that we're not allowed to brew right now," Irvin said.

The Iowa Brewer's Guild has advocated for the bill, and Olde Main has used its blog and Twitter pages to raise awareness of the issue.

"We're trying to use some of that social media to get people excited about it," Irvin said.

If the bill passes, though, Irvin cautions Olde Main fans not to get too excited — the new beer will take time to perfect and produce.

"It'd be a couple months before I'd feel ready," he said.

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