

## **Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel**

**WINE SALES**

### **Don't give minors more access to alcohol**

**By Jay Romine**

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The Florida Police Chiefs Association disagrees with many of the points raised in Monday's guest column by state Sen. Paula Dockery, "Wine bill can help on several fronts."

Let's be clear: The bills referred to in the column would not tighten the law, but weaken restrictions on alcohol products, specifically wine, by creating special exemptions to allow out-of-state sellers to take orders for alcohol products directly over the Internet and ship directly to homes.

We believe these bills will create a situation that makes it easier for minors to purchase alcohol products over the Internet. Changing the law will not help law enforcement catch those who sell to minors, because out-of-state offenders are completely out of reach and unaccountable.

These are not proposals to help law enforcement officers fight underage drinking. In fact, they will make our jobs harder.

Studies show that minors are already using the Internet to purchase alcohol. About 10 percent of all underage drinkers have obtained alcohol products over the Internet or through home delivery, according to the National Academy of Sciences report "Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility."

Delivery drivers can't be the safety net for ID checks, because it's not their job to enforce the law. Instead, we rely on Florida's licensed retailers to take responsibility for checking ID, because we can hold them fully accountable for selling to minors.

The Florida Police Chiefs Association is part of a coalition consisting of law enforcement agencies, community groups, faith-based groups, businesses and individuals who support Florida's laws restricting the direct shipping of alcohol.

Should we make it easier for minors to order alcohol over the Internet? Our answer is no.

*Chief Jay Romine of the Holmes Beach Police Department is president of the Florida Police Chiefs Association.*