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## Bill uncorks battle over wine shipping

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TALLAHASSEE - Wine wholesalers and law enforcement officials are furiously fighting efforts to allow the shipment of wine from out-of-state dealers directly to Florida consumers.

Sen. Paula Dockery, R-Lakeland, filed a bill last week that would allow Floridians to again receive wine shipped from other states.

In 1997, lawmakers banned direct mailing of any alcoholic beverage. They cited concerns about underage drinking and the difficulties in collecting state taxes.

Graphically representing their concerns at a Tuesday news conference, the Florida Coalition to Prevent Underage Drinking opened up three boxes that had been shipped to a 20-year-old Florida State University student, at the group's request.

The boxes contained four bottles of wine, a bottle of vodka and a bottle of tequila. The coalition said the student didn't have to sign for the shipments and no efforts were made by the shippers to see if he was 21.

Dockery said the coalition's publicity stunt pointed to a need for more regulation, which her bill would provide. Senate Bill 906 would require out-of-state wine shippers to register with the state so taxes could be collected, and would also require signatures from adults before wine could be delivered.

She has an ally in high places. Gov. Jeb Bush said Tuesday he supports Dockery's bill.

"The idea that you can only buy wine through a certain distribution system I've always felt that was a little unjust," Bush said.

Joining the coalition against the bill was the state's largest liquor and wine distributors, who stand to lose money if Floridians can skip the wholesalers and buy directly from the vineyards.

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