



New York **STATE OF WINE**

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE NYS ASSEMBLY AND NYS SENATE FROM THE NEW YORK STATE OF WINE COALITION URGING THE INCLUSION OF WINE IN GROCERY STORES IN THE FY27 BUDGET

January 27, 2026

The New York State of Wine Coalition, an unprecedented coalition of supermarkets, independent grocers, wineries, agricultural stakeholders and business groups, strongly urges the NYS Assembly and NYS Senate include the sale of wine in grocery stores in the FY27 Executive Budget.

The overwhelming majority of New Yorkers have consistently expressed their support for updating New York's outdated ABC laws to allow grocery stores to sell wine. Furthermore, recent polls also show that fully 80% of New Yorkers who buy wine would continue to visit their local liquor and wine stores, reinforcing the fact that NY liquor stores will continue to thrive in the state alongside grocery stores selling wine, as they do in nearly 40 other states across the country.

In a challenging budget year such as this, this policy would generate new licensing and sales tax revenue without new state spending, support agriculture and our struggling wine industry, stabilize grocery stores that serve as frontline partners in anti-hunger programs, and could support food security initiatives or other threatened budget priorities. It is a common-sense change that will build upon the successes of prior ABC reforms, including cocktails-to-go, alcohol in movie theaters, Sunday liquor sales, and retail to retail sales.

But most importantly, within the context of today's Joint Budget Hearing on Ag & Markets, wine in grocery stores would be an absolute game changer for New York State wineries and our wine industry. It will help to ensure the long-term success of a key agricultural sector at a time when economic pressures and industry shifts are making it harder and harder for many of these businesses to thrive. Consider the following stark realities:

- While New York is the third-largest wine producer in the US, with a \$13 billion economic impact and a growing number of awards and accolades, the industry's revenue decreased by \$10 million from 2019-2023.
- New York wineries are suffering significantly as result of retaliatory tariffs and other trade barriers with Canada, as evidenced by the fact that monthly U.S. wine exports to Canada completely collapsed from \$34 million in May 2024 to just over \$961,000 in May 2025.
- And finally, it is, quite frankly, shocking to note that only 13% of the wines made in New York are actually sold by New York State liquor stores or restaurants.

Within this challenging environment, wine in grocery stores would provide an immediate boost...enabling NY wineries to reach more customers and increase brand recognition and revenue. And it would be done in partnership with NY grocers who have a long, proven record of promoting New York State agricultural products. Beyond these general benefits, wineries could be further helped through the creation of a wine in grocery stores initiative in the FY27 budget that includes thoughtful industry support measures such as those included in Senator Krueger's and Assembly Member Hunter's current legislative proposal.

These include: 1) incentivizing grocery stores to promote and sell New York-produced wines by offering reductions in their annual wine licensing fees, based upon the volume of New York wines sold; and 2) directing licensing fees to programs that directly support New York's wineries, including marketing, agri-tourism and small business support programs. This thoughtful, proactive approach to incentivizing New York wine sales has earned the support of the NYS Farm Bureau, wineries such as Frontenac Point, Colloca Estate, and Song Hill, as well as wine industry suppliers such as Waterloo Container.

These positive impacts on the industry were recently confirmed in an economic impact study undertaken by FTI consulting, which characterized wine in grocery stores as "a lifeline for New York's wine country." The study concluded: *"Expanding wine sales to grocery stores, with an incentive for stores to stock New York wines, would strengthen connections between local producers and consumers, boost tourism, and generate new economic growth across rural communities. Under the Hunter-Krueger scenario, expanded sales would support approximately 1,988 jobs and generate \$371.7 million in new annual economic activity. Much of this growth would come from increased sales of New York wines and related agrotourism, drawing more visitors to vineyards, tasting rooms, restaurants, and small local businesses across the state. The Hunter-Krueger bill also dedicates a portion of new license fee revenue to the promotion and marketing of New York-produced wines. These gains represent a direct, sustainable way to boost job creation and private investment in regions still working to recover from pandemic-era tourism losses and agricultural slowdowns."*

In conclusion, we would like to point out that Wine Enthusiast recently named the Finger Lakes Region their 2025 American Wine Region of the Year. The owner of one the incredible wineries in the heart of the Finger Lakes, Frontenac Point Estate Winery, responded to this honor with an op-ed (a copy is attached) that cut to the heart of the challenge he and his fellow industry members are facing:

"As I follow in the footsteps and build on the successes of my parents who were pioneers in the Finger Lakes wine region, we are honored by these accolades and couldn't agree more that our region's wines are among the finest in the world. Now go try and find one of them behind the growing stacks of High Noons, Surfides and canned espresso martinis at your local liquor store. ... Governor, there is one simple, universally popular step that you and the Legislature can take in the next state budget to help us to actually "grow and flourish" and truly represent a "win for our state's economy." That's opening up grocery store shelves across New York State as a destination for far too many New York State wines that just got pushed out by another case of ready-to-drink espresso martinis."

The New York State of Wine Coalition could not agree more and we once again urge the inclusion of wine in grocery stores in the FY27 New York State budget.

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For more information about the New York State of Wine Coalition, please visit:
www.newyorkstateofwine.org or contact wigsny@berlinrosen.com.



Also featured in: Times Herald-Record (Middletown) | Daily Messenger (Canandaigua) | The Leader (Corning) | Times Telegram (Herkimer) | Observer-Dispatch (Utica) | Press & Sun-Bulletin (Binghamton) | Star Gazette (Elmira) | Ithaca Journal | Poughkeepsie Journal | The Journal News/Lohud

OPINION

Good luck finding award-winning New York wines behind canned cocktails

By Lawrence Doolittle

Co-Owner of Frontenac Point Estate Winery

November 12, 2025

Last month, Wine Enthusiast magazine named the Finger Lakes the 2025 “American Wine Region of the Year.” They noted that “the Finger Lakes boasts over 140 wineries and over 10,000 acres under vine. Its narrative is still being shaped by newcomers whose ideas and experiences are woven with the deep knowledge held by the region’s multi-generational families. Together they create a rich tapestry of both innovation and tradition.” As I follow in the footsteps and build on the successes of my parents who were pioneers in the Finger Lakes wine region, we are honored by these accolades and couldn’t agree more that our region’s wines are among the finest in the world.

Now go try and find one of them behind the growing stacks of High Noons, Surfsides and canned espresso martinis at your local liquor store.

We want nothing more than for New Yorkers to have access to the incredible range of New York wines from the Finger Lakes, Long Island and the Hudson Valley, but the reality is that it is virtually impossible to find New York wines in many of the liquor stores across the state. In fact, only 13% of New York State-produced wines — many of which are internationally acclaimed award-winners — end up being sold in our state’s liquor stores or restaurants. That statistic alone is evidence that something needs to change.

But, now also consider the fact that liquor stores have an exclusive legal right to the sale of canned cocktails, the fastest growing segment of the alcohol market by far. Go into any New York liquor store and you will literally see canned cocktails stacked on the floor and covering store shelves that once featured wine. And that refrigerated case in the back that used to have at least one or two cold New York white wines? Now it's full of vodka-based Arnold Palmers and tequila sodas.

New York must allow wine sales in grocery stores

It is absolutely time to make a long-needed, publicly-supported change to our state's outdated liquor laws and finally allow the sale of wine in grocery stores, as they do in more than 40 other states. The fact is that consumers buy products they are exposed to and so getting our high-quality local wines in front of people where they buy food would be an absolute game-changer for our state's wine industry (especially since most people don't recognize just how big and important this industry is!). More than 75% of New Yorkers have consistently said that they want this, and importantly, more than 80% of those who buy wine say they would continue to patronize their local liquor stores.

Furthermore, a recent legislative proposal in Albany to allow wine in grocery stores has specific incentives for supermarkets to promote and sell New York wines, generates critically-needed new revenue for the state, and commits to re-investing some of the funds directly back into supporting New York wineries, both large and small. This is a win/win/win for consumers, our agricultural industry and the state overall.

Not surprisingly, however, the liquor lobby continues to oppose this common-sense change, despite the fact that it now includes new incentives and protections for liquor stores as well. But we could have predicted this, because in previous efforts we were involved in to allow wine in grocery stores, liquor stores were offered the opportunity to sell beer and they declined because they said they had no space. Now, they suddenly have plenty of shelves and coolers available to stock with ready-to-drink cocktails? Hypocrisy, pure and simple — and at the expense of the New York wine industry.

In the press release praising our Finger Lakes wineries, Gov. Kathy Hochul said: "The state continues to support its winemakers and vineyards, encouraging the industry to grow and flourish... it's a win for our state's economy and our reputation as a global wine destination."

Governor, there is one simple, universally popular step that you and the Legislature can take in the next state budget to help us to actually "grow and flourish" and truly represent a "win for our state's economy." That's opening up grocery store shelves across New York State as a destination for far too many New York State wines that just got pushed out by another case of ready-to-drink espresso martinis.

Lawrence Doolittle is co-owner of Frontenac Point Estate Winery.