March 5th, 2024
SB 511
Proponent
Steve Nicholson
Owner and Head Brewer
Center Pivot Restaurant and Brewery

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

Several years ago in the spring, I was invited to collaborate with Rick at Walnut River Brewing. We decided on a strawberry blonde recipe to be released in May for the summer months. Brew day went great and a couple of weeks later I ordered two 1/2 bbl kegs from the distributor. The kegs arrived in JULY! This was so disappointing. Most of the summer was gone before the kegs even arrived. I texted and called to find out what was the hold up - and it was always another excuse. Either one of their crew at Walnut River or myself could have made the delivery in a day or even met halfway with the ability to conduct DIRECT SALES.

Here is another potential scenario...
Shiloh Winery is ~25 mi away and on a dirt road in Trego county. We have a great relationship with the owners and they have expressed interest in having a keg or two of my beers on tap for their guests that do not prefer wine. To go through a distributor would involve 1) picking up the keg(s) from my brewery, typically on a Wednesday is the route, 2) keg travels to warehouse in Hays until, 3) the following Wednesday when the truck travels westward and delivers the keg to a liquor store in WaKeeney, and then 4) someone from Shiloh picks up the keg and takes it out to the winery.   The reverse path and same amount of time would be involved for the empty keg to be returned to me. With the option for Direct Sales a full keg could get from my brewery to the winery and any empty kegs back to the brewery in an hour or less!

Side note - we do need distributors. We need them for handling large volumes of beer and/or moving it great distances. That is how they make their profits. Let them do that. That is what they were designed to do. The small breweries in small markets need the option to do DIRECT SALES for ourselves. Just like the wineries.

Hope this helps!
Cheers!

--
Steve Nicholson
Owner & Head Brewer