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New Polling Data Shows 78 percent of Virginians Support Restaurants Selling Alcohol To Go and for Delivery on Permanent Basis

Richmond, VA – New data released by the National Restaurant Association, in conjunction with the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging and Travel Association (VRLTA), found 78 percent of Virginians support making permanent existing practices that allow restaurant customers to purchase alcoholic beverages with their takeout and delivery food orders.

In April, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam ordered the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority (VABC) to allow all restaurants the opportunity to serve alcohol with delivery and pick-up orders to help restaurants generate revenue to make up for losses caused by dining room closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the recent data, customers are taking advantage of the order with approximately one in three Virginia adults who recently purchased takeout or delivery including alcohol with their order. Additionally, 39 percent of restaurant patrons said the option of including alcoholic beverages with their order made them more likely to choose one restaurant over a competitor that does not offer alcohol sales.

“The popularity of ordering mixed beverages to-go or for delivery shows that people want it,” said **Sarah White, Operating Partner at Cowboy Café in Arlington**. “We keep hearing from customers that it’s nice to order and enjoy a cocktail without getting dressed up and going to a bar. We keep hearing how happy they are to be able to relax in their own home and still feel like they’re receiving the full dining experience.”

As states reopen and the national economy emerges from the effects of the pandemic, policymakers in statehouses across the country are also looking for ways to support the restaurant industry. In Virginia alone, the restaurant industry employs over 375,000 people, or 9 percent of the Commonwealth’s entire workforce.

“To recover and achieve solvency, restaurants need access to a diverse set of revenue streams as they reopen at limited capacity,” said **Eric Terry, President of the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging and Travel Association**. “To-go and delivery beer, wine, and mixed cocktails has been a welcomed addition, has been safely implemented by operators, and has provided restaurants across the Commonwealth with a fighting chance to succeed in these challenging times.”

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 public health crisis, more than 30 states have passed regulations allowing restaurant alcohol sales to-go and for delivery, helping to accelerate the recovery of the hard-hit industry. Many, including Virginia, are considering making the new regulations permanent.

“Across the country, elected leaders have taken action to allow restaurants to sell beer, wine, and mixed drinks to customers via to-go and delivery,” said **Mike Whatley, Vice President of State and Local Affairs at the National Restaurant Association**. “These new regulations have been an essential lifeline for local operators during COVID-19 shutdowns. As restaurants face the long road to recovery in the coming months and years, we encourage elected leaders in Virginia to extend these popular regulations going forward.”

Across Virginia, countless restaurateurs have voiced support for making alcohol to-go and for delivery permanent.

“We’re grateful for the VABC’s recent approval of to-go cocktails, which have helped tremendously in our attempt to recoup drastic revenue losses from the pandemic,” noted **Billy Ennis, Co-Owner of Bay Local Eatery in Virginia Beach**. “In addition to offering an added draw to encourage our guests to visit for curbside service, it ultimately allows for them to take a piece of the distinctive Bay Local experience with them. We desperately hope that this added takeaway experience will be offered indefinitely.”

Shannon Conway, Director of Operations for R&L Hospitality Group in Richmond, agreed: “Cocktails to-go has been a great way to add back revenue we’re sorely missing without dine-in service. Not to mention, it’s an awesome way to connect with our guests and deliver more fully on the experiences that made them frequent visitors in the first place. Things aren’t going to ‘go back to normal’ for restaurants—and takeout and delivery will be a more significant part of all restaurants’ income going forward.”

The online survey was administered in May as part of a National Restaurant Association study conducted by Engine among a demographically representative sample of 500 adults living in the state of Virginia.

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