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## The Sunday Blues: Some US states don't seem to realize Prohibition is over

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It's Sunday. In the year 2013. In the US, a country that is incredibly concerned about making it easy to buy guns – and just about everything else – except alcohol.

According to the history books, America's Prohibition only lasted from 1920 to 1933. There are plenty of stories of the days of jazz and gangsters and bootleg liquor. What you don't hear as much about is that Prohibition has had a funny way of sticking around.

You still can't purchase any alcohol products – no beer, wine or liquor – at an Indiana store on Sundays. It's even worse when it comes to liquor: 12 states still don't allow Sunday liquor sales at stores. Connecticut, hardly a conservative state, only started allowing Sunday alcohol sales last year.

That's right, in a country that promotes NFL Sunday Night Football and the partying that goes with it like a religion, you have to make sure to get your alcohol long before kickoff in some states.

Odd alcohol laws abound in the US. In Kentucky and South Carolina, you can't buy alcohol anywhere on Election Day, even at a bar, making it a little harder to toast or drown your sorrows over election results. In five states, you can buy alcohol at your local grocery store, but only the watered down stuff – no higher than 3.2% strength.

America is often called a patchwork of different cultures, but it's varying alcohol policies are akin to a crazy quilt. In some states, consumers can walk into any grocery or convenience store and find alcohol prominently displayed on shelves 24/7. In other states, like New York, you still have to go to a separate wine and spirits store to buy those products. Even if Sunday sales are allowed, some states don't allow alcohol sales until noon.

These restrictions are relics of Prohibition and Blue Laws, which were designed to keep Sundays a holy day. Even after Prohibition ended, there were deals struck with temperance groups to supposedly keep people safe (and at church), which is why many states went to a state store system or at least state control of wholesale alcohol sales.

Tomorrow, Pennsylvania lawmakers are expected to introduce a bill to privatize their state liquor store system. They've tried this numerous times over the years, but there's always pushback. Despite the fact that the majority of the public wants to make it a lot easier to buy alcohol, there is a bizarre coalition of the religious right and unions, who represent the state store workers. So the far left and the far right unite to keep this antiquated system that the majority of state residents detest.

It's a similar story in other states. Most people in Minnesota would like to be able to buy liquor on Sundays, but their state lawmakers don't seem to get the message, even though neighboring states are doing a healthy business from Minnesotans driving across states lines to make purchases.

These Sunday Blue Laws are especially baffling. I happen to attend church services regularly, but I have also had drinks on Sundays. It's clear that as America grows more diverse, Sunday is not a holy day for as many people. Even some Christian denominations have their main services on Saturdays. Culturally, Sunday is still a day of relaxation, but for many, including churchgoers, that includes alcoholic beverages.

Let's also not pretend there are any morals left in our shopping culture. Those went away when stores started opening on holidays like Thanksgiving. Stores are opening earlier and earlier on that holiday, eroding family time and what once was a sacred day for many Americans. Now it's all about shopping hype. The same is true of Sundays, which have become prime shopping days. There's no reason people should have to come back to a store on Monday to buy their liquor.

It's been 80 years since Prohibition ended. Surely it's time to update alcohol laws for the 21st Century.

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