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## Pop goes the bubbly

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BY [STEVE WALSH](#) Post-Tribune

A quirk of the calendar means party-goers will have to stock up early for their holiday alcohol this year.

Indiana's ban on Sunday sales of packaged alcohol will remain in force, shuttering liquor stores on one of the busiest days of the year. Northwest Indiana liquor retailers expect brisk business -- for Illinois retailers.

"It's going to hurt. What will happen is people will forget and then they will cross the state line and clean off the shelves," said Thad Brody, owner of Booze Liquors, 61st Avenue in Merrillville.

"Somebody in the state legislature should do something about this. I don't want to work on Sunday but for special occasions like this, the state loses a lot of tax money."

While liquor stores will be shuttered, the owners of bars and restaurants that serve alcohol can raise a glass to a state law passed in the last session, which allows them to remain open longer when New Year's Eve falls on a Sunday.

"If we didn't do something, you are talking about a loss of probably more than a million dollars statewide," said Brad Klopfenstein, executive director of the Indiana Licensed Beverage Association.

Normally bars and restaurants can sell alcohol until 3 a.m. each day except Sunday, when the law requires sales to stop at 12:30 a.m., he said.

New Year's Eve long ago lost its crown as the busiest day of the year for bars. The day before Thanksgiving now tops the list, followed by Halloween and St. Patrick's Day, then New Year's Eve. But the last day of the year is still the latest of the major holidays, with crowds filing in until at least the clock strikes midnight, he said.

"You need those extra hours on New Year's Eve because people arrive late and stay past midnight," Klopfenstein said.

The law, which does not allow bars to sell package liquor on Sunday, was not changed, so anyone who needs an extra six-pack will have to shop ahead, he said.

While Indiana's maze of liquor laws will impact the holidays, the state has never adopted rules regulating the hours of fireworks retailers. Those retailers can remain open all night, so anyone who wants to ring in the new year with a bang can shop up until the last minute.

Some companies are planning special hours in the lead-up to New Year's Eve, which has become the second largest holiday for fireworks.

"It's not nearly as busy as the Fourth (of July), but the week after Christmas is busier than any normal week in the off-season," said Chris Beeler, assistant manager at Phantom Fireworks, Merrillville.

The Merrillville store will close at 10 p.m. instead of 8 p.m., from the day after Christmas to New Year's Eve, he said.

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