

Two initiatives that would privatize liquor sales will be on the ballot in Washington state this November, and Gov. Chris Gregoire foresees horrible consequences if they pass.

The Democratic governor told [the seattle.pi blog](#) that if Initiatives 1100 and 1105 pass, the state will see big increases in underage drinking, drunken driving and other alcohol-related problems, as well as losing revenue.

“We have enough DUI problems out there,” she said. “We have enough domestic violence out there.”

Right now Washington is among the states with the tightest regulations on the sale of liquor, with the hard stuff being sold only at state stores. The initiatives, heavily bankrolled by Costco, would allow liquor to be sold anywhere beer and wine can now be sold, making Washington’s liquor laws among the most liberal in the country.

The battle in Washington, [the Wall Street Journal wrote](#) in June, “is being closely watched by producers, distributors and retailers of beer, wine and liquor across the U.S. because it would mark the most sweeping overhaul of any state’s alcohol trade regulations in years and could presage similar proposals in other states” – maybe including Oregon.

“Do you want liquor sold at street corner stores all across the state of Washington?” Gregoire rhetorically asked [seattle.pi](#).

Well, since you’re asking the question, Chris – yes. In fact, hell yes.

I grew up in a state (New Jersey) where liquor, beer and wine were sold by private retailers. There wasn’t exactly a liquor store on every corner, but there were plenty of them.

In the adjacent state of Pennsylvania, liquor was sold only at state liquor stores. That made booze a little harder to get and more expensive, but there wasn't any evidence that it made drunken driving, underage drinking or wife-beating less prevalent than in New Jersey.

If people are determined to drink they're going to get alcohol one way or another; the experience of Prohibition proved that. Washington's state liquor monopoly – and Oregon's variation, in which liquor is sold by a limited number of retailers under contract with the state – are antiquated relics of the Prohibition era and need to go.