

## Bill could change what counts as alcohol in Nebraska

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Legislation would classify drinks under 0.5% ABV as non-alcoholic but maintain age restrictions for sales

- Nebraska legislation would classify drinks with under 0.5% alcohol by volume as non-alcoholic
- Sales to minors would remain illegal with no established penalties for violations.
- The proposal comes as nationwide non-alcoholic beverage sales near \$1 billion

### BROADCAST TRANSCRIPT:

New Nebraska legislation could redefine what counts as an alcoholic drink in the state, with supporters arguing it will modernize laws as non-alcoholic beers gain popularity.

The proposed bill would classify drinks with an alcohol by volume (ABV) level under 0.5% as non-alcoholic. While it would remain illegal to sell these products to anyone under 21, the legislation establishes no penalties for violations and does not prohibit minors from consuming these beverages.

Chris Wagner, who leads Project Extra Mile, opposes the legislation. I met with Wagner at his office on the University of Nebraska Omaha campus to discuss his concerns.

"I think there is obviously, already a high chance that if underage youth want to get their hands on actual beer or actual alcoholic beverages, it's easier for them to do than say high school youth or middle school youth," Wagner said.

Low-ABV drinks are becoming increasingly popular. Market research from Nielsen IQ in 2025 found that \$925 million was spent on total sales for non-alcoholic beverages, up 22% year over year.

Similar attempts to change alcohol beverage laws failed in 2023 and 2025.

Sen. Stan Clouse from Kearney authored the bill. His office did not respond to a request for comment.

A committee hearing is scheduled for Mon., Feb. 9