

Glad You Asked!

Q. I went to a chapter meeting (I won't say what chapter) and saw a member drinking a beer. Is that allowed at a chapter function?

A. This is a question I have heard more than once. I would like to provide a 2-pronged answer.

First and foremost, there is a GWRRA policy on alcohol. It can be summarized as follows:

At GWRRA functions, GWRRA or its officers cannot:

- *Provide Alcohol*
- *Cause alcohol to be available*
- *Profit from the sale of alcohol*
- *Use alcohol as a door prize or give-away*
- *Advertise the availability of alcohol*

I would like to cover each of these for purposes of clarification.

Providing alcohol should be apparent. Bringing or buying alcohol for distribution to members or participants is not allowed.

Causing it to be available may need some clarification. If a business or facility that is being used for GWRRA purpose (e.g., Chapter gathering) in its normal course of business sells alcohol, then GWRRA is not causing it to be available. If, however, it is not normally available, and by request, it is made available for the function, then this is a violation of policy. Here is an example of violating the policy. A meeting, seminar, or other function is being held in a meeting room at a hotel that normally sells alcohol at its bar. At the request of GWRRA representative or officer, an open "satellite" bar is set up for the participants at or near the meeting. Even though the facility normally sells alcohol at its regular bar, this is a violation since the satellite bar would not normally exist.

Profit from the sale of alcohol can occur if an arrangement is made with any seller of alcohol for a percent of the profits, such as at a hotel bar where an event will be held. Any sale of alcohol at the site of a GWRRA function has to be separate and independent from the GWRRA activity occurring at or near the facility where alcohol is sold.

Using alcohol as a door prize or giveaway is obvious. We simply cannot give it away as a prize, favor, or include it in a raffle or silent auction, which also constitutes profiting from the sale of alcohol (through the sale of tickets to win it, or the silent auction purchase).

Advertise the availability of alcohol should also be obvious. If the facility where an event is going to be held sells alcohol, this cannot be advertised or promoted (e.g., in flyers, e-mail, on the web, etc.).

*Having said all of this, nowhere does the policy state that alcohol may not be consumed at a GWRRA function. Drinking, like religion and politics, are **personal** choices. GWRRA does not intend to dictate our personal choices. All of the above requirements of the policy are intended to minimize or eliminate liability to GWRRA regarding alcohol.*

The second prong of my answer is more on a personal plane. What if members drink at a GWRRA function, of their own choice? What if they are "over-served" or otherwise impaired? Obviously, we don't want anyone being hurt due to themselves or others being impaired. Hopefully, as friends, we will do what we can to look after each other, and have the courage to have the crucial conversation or even take away our friend's keys if the situation warrants. That also, is a personal choice.