

**Testimony from the Vermont Brewers Association  
The House Commerce and Economic Development Committee  
The Senate Economic Development, Housing & General Affairs Committee.**

**RE: Tourism Economy Day at the State House (2024)**

**April 11, 2024**

Thank – you for the opportunity to testify this morning. My name is Bob Grim, a co-founder of Foam Brewers and Vice President for the Vermont Brewers Association. With me is **Emma Arian**, the Executive Director of the Vermont Brewers Association.

We are here today to tell the Vermont craft beer industry story and increase awareness. Craft beer is a significant driver of the Vermont economy. Vermont Brewers Association has 60 brewery members that employ 2,593 people. The average wage in our industry is \$38,887 annually. The economic impact (output) that Vermont's craft beer has is \$384,490,000 and the impact per capita is \$768.31 which puts Vermont 1<sup>st</sup> in the nation for per capita impact. Vermont brews 324,505 barrels of craft beer annually and also ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the nation for beer brewed per capita. The Vermont craft beer industry draws tourists to Vermont and is a critical part of our rural economy – with many craft breweries drawing customers to our very rural towns and village centers. Craft breweries are gathering places contributing to the rich fabric of our communities. We are grateful for the continued support and consideration from the Vermont legislature and Scott administration.

The Vermont Brewers Association was founded in 1995 by Greg Noonan to promote and strengthen the culture of craft brewing in Vermont through marketing, education and advocacy for Vermont made beer. A big part of the VBA's marketing initiative is taproom experience for tourists and craft beer enthusiasts through a digital and paper passport where users can redeem their brewery stamps for free VBA merchandise. The digital passport has 17,000+ registered users and over the past year we have had 15,339 active users and 44,373 page views on the app with 75% of them being out-of-state/country visitors. Over the past year, in total there have been 15,911 passport stamps at VBA member breweries, assuming that each consumer spends \$15 during each visit (a low estimate), \$238,665 was spent in Vermont Brewers Association member breweries driven from the passport program. At Foam, we have had 567 stamps in the past year with an estimated \$8,505 driven from the passport beer traffic.

I'd like to make a special acknowledgment to the esteemed former state legislator and polymath Bill Mares, as well as the revered "Godfather of VT beer" Greg Noonan, for their pivotal roles in shaping the trajectory of VT breweries to their current stature. Reflecting on our roots is paramount in navigating our future path with clarity and purpose.

Foam was established in April 2016 by a diverse group of 5 passionate individuals dedicated to crafting exceptional creative beer. We aim to support the vibrant VT community, including artists, musicians, and farmers, while providing a distinctive space for authentic connections.

The dynamic beer industry constantly challenges us, ensuring we stay engaged and inspired. A wise brewer once told me, "If you're ever bored in the brewery, you're missing out, as there's always more to discover." This philosophy extends beyond our brewing operations; we see ourselves not merely as producers but as integral parts of our communities. Each brewery has a unique essence that defies a simple description or personality, making the experience truly exhilarating.

The Vermont beer-making community embodies JFK's inspiring words, "a rising tide lifts all boats." We share a deep bond, supporting one another and the communities that sustain us. When Lawson's Finest Liquids in Waitsfield, VT took the lead, Vermont brewers united to create a special brew. The goal? To raise funds for those in Vermont impacted by last summer's devastating floods.

I am pleased to mention that Foam Brewery was among the contributors to this collaborative charity effort, raising ~\$15K.

Key events that attract visitors to VT, positively influencing breweries bottom line:

- Ski Season
- *\*Eclipse\**
- Jazz Fest
- Apple Picking
- Leaf Peeping

Foam Specific:

- Anniversary Party (Last weekend of April! 8 Yrs)
- Funk On The Water (All proceeds are donated to Echo Center to go toward Lake Champlain clean-up efforts.)
- BTV Waterfront Events (Marathon, VT Brewfest, Music & festivals, ADog Day, Dragon Boat Races)

Thank you to the The House Commerce and Economic Development Committee and The Senate Economic Development, Housing & General Affairs Committee for taking the time to learn about the brewing industry in VT and how it impacts tourism. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.