

Editorial: Massachusetts booze tax did not uncork disaster

By [The Republican Editorials](#)

February 09, 2010, 5:46AM

Folks who believe the Bay State should repeal the new alcoholic beverage tax should think again.

Recent figures from the state Department of Revenue indicate that revenues from the tax are \$10 million ahead of projections. By June 30, those revenues are expected to be \$20 million more than expected.

Although package store owners question these figures, claims that the tax would drive consumers to New Hampshire to buy booze don't appear to be panning out. Liquor sales in the state have actually increased 1 percent since the tax went into effect.

State officials don't know why sales are up, and we're not celebrating because people are drinking more.

But we do know this. The recession has played havoc with the state's budget, forcing cuts to numerous programs that helped many people.

The booze tax, which only adds about 50 cents to an \$8 six pack of beer, has already raised about \$52.5 million. Combine that with the 1.25 percent increase in the sales tax and other fees, and the state has raised \$315 million more in taxes than in fiscal 2009.

While it's easy to say that the governor should cut more, many residents might find that the next service to go will be one they value.

As our letter writers often point out: One person's boondoggle is another person's life saver. Just witness the outcry that arose when the state tried to close the outpatient medical clinic at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home.

No one relishes paying more taxes. But we accept the fact that the state needs the revenue to provide the services we expect from the government. So while the recession lasts, we will buy domestic beer and wine in bottles that don't come with corks. And when it's over, we'll demand that lawmakers put the state's boom or bust budget and tax policies back in the bottle.