



# Congressman Tim Bishop

*FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK*

## NEWS RELEASE

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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **BISHOP PRAISES SUPREME COURT DECISION SUPPORTING LONG ISLAND WINERIES**

*High Court Ruling a Win for the Wine Industry; Can Ship Directly to Out of State Consumers*

**Washington, DC**-Congressman Tim Bishop today applauded the U.S. Supreme Court for its decision to allow wineries to compete in an open market by selling their wines directly to out of state consumers. Currently local vintners may only sell their wine directly to New York State consumers, but must use wholesalers to distribute out of state. Each state was granted the ability to write its own laws regarding the sale of alcohol by the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment, which repealed prohibition. The Supreme Court declared New York's restrictions on interstate commerce, and other states with similar laws, unconstitutional.

"This is a great win for the entire wine industry, but more significantly, the local Long Island wineries," Bishop expressed. "Long Island's tourism industry is driven in large part by the world class wines produced on the East End. It's about time that out of state wine enthusiasts can enjoy their favorite vintage directly from the producer."

Bishop has been a strong advocate for repealing the ban on wineries directly selling their products. In August 2003, he joined with a bipartisan coalition of six New York Representatives, who urged Governor George Pataki to remove the ban. Bishop has argued that in the modern marketplace where consumers often go on the Internet to find products, the ban was detrimental to local wineries.

"It was wrong that tourists could enjoy an East End wine and not be able to have a case shipped home or urge their friends to sample a bottle," Bishop said. "This ruling now puts our wineries on a level playing field, and we can all toast to that."

New York State ranks third nationally in wine production. According to the New York Farm Bureau, the state has almost 1,000 family-owned vineyards that produce 175,000 tons of grapes annually-- a \$40 million industry. There are 160 wineries in the four main wine-producing regions of the state: the Finger Lakes, Long Island, the Hudson River Valley and the Lake Erie region. These wineries produce over 100 million bottles of wine every year and attract approximately one million tourists.

To the detriment of New York's wine industry, state law prohibits the direct shipment of wine to consumers in other states. The law was ruled unconstitutional in 2003 by the U.S. District Court, but appealed in 2004 by New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer. Thirteen states already have reciprocal wine shipment laws and eight have laws that allow direct shipment of wine. In addition, the Federal Trade Commission recently released a report showing that the direct shipment of wine will lower prices, will increase consumer choice and will not lead to tax evasion or the sale of alcohol to minors, as some opponents argue.

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