



Date: December 15, 2009

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From:

Councilmember Patrick O'Donnell, Fourth District

Councilmember Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District

Councilmember Tonia Reyes Uranga, Seventh District

Councilmember Robert Garcia, First District

Subject: **Self-checkout machines and alcohol sales**

Background:

Self-checkout machines at grocery stores are a recent innovation that allow the customer to check and bag their own groceries, providing convenience for consumers and proprietors. However, particular items, including cigarettes, cannot be purchased in self-checkout lines. These safeguards were put into place to ensure that minors cannot purchase items illegally. Despite the minimum drinking age of 21 in the state of California, consumers may still purchase alcohol in self-checkout lines.

When there is an attempt to purchase alcohol through a self-checkout machine, the machine locks up and indicates that employee assistance is necessary to complete the transaction. Despite this, a recent study by UCLA's Community Economic Development Clinic and the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy found that these safeguards failed nearly 20% of the time. Additionally, self-checkout machines make the task of prohibiting the sale of alcohol to those who are already intoxicated very difficult, causing potential safety concerns.

The potential for minors and those already under-the-influence to utilize self-checkout lines to purchase alcohol could potentially create a public health problem. It is appropriate at this time that the City of Long Beach require that grocery stores direct the sale of alcohol to in-person checkout lines.

Recommendation:

Request City Manager and City Attorney to work with appropriate staff to ban the sale of alcohol at self-checkout counters in the City of Long Beach.