

Greeting:

Opening statement:

Testimony:

I would like to give everyone a brief history of Nimble Hill Vineyard and Winery and the newly established Nimble Hill Brewing Company.

It all started with agriculture. After purchasing our farm in 1997 it became apparent to my wife and me that we wanted more for our farm than idle farm land. At the time it was partially used by the neighboring farm for pasture and hay. Mainstream farming was no longer profitable. That is why we picked a new to Northeast Pennsylvania industry, wine grapes and wine production. The southeast and northwest regions of Pennsylvania have already shown great success with vineyards for juice and wine. The Endless Mountains of Pennsylvania are a little more challenging to grow quality wine grapes. We thought! After many seminars and meetings with viticulture professionals we planted our vineyard in 2005. In 2006 we obtained our Limited Winery license. The original winery facility was located in our family's garage. Production in 2006 was 3000 gallons and on July 1, 2007 we sold our first bottle of wine at our satellite location in Tunkhannock. The main reason the Tunkhannock location was chosen over our farm location for our retail sales outlet was convenience for our customers and it is on US Route 6 just outside of Tunkhannock . In 2008 we moved the production out of our garage and into the new winery faculty that we use today. The 2011 vintage production was at 10,000 gallons, a 7000 gallon increase in just 5 years.

Now I would like to talk about Nimble Hill Brewing Company. As with Nimble Hill Vineyard and Winery the brewery started with agriculture. I decided I would like to be part of jumpstarting another new agriculture business in Endless Mountains. Hops. I started my research with commercial growers in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, extension agents from Cornell University and also the University of Vermont. In the late 1800's New York State was one of the countries largest producers of hops. It disappeared due to prohibition and diseases that could not be controlled at that time. In the past couple of years the New York commercial hop yard start ups have increased 400%. This is largely due to the Farm to Table and craft brew industry explosion. Listed is another interesting fact about a town 20 miles from our planned hop yard:

Hop Bottom was formerly known as "Foster." Native Americans once lived in the area and the only clear meadows to be found were near the bottom of the creek. These meadows were covered with hop vines, leading the early settlers to coin the town, "Hop Bottom."^[1] The new name reflected the hops which were grown in the valley for local breweries.

When prohibition came the agriculture business of hop growing and small local breweries dissapeared.

In 2011/2012 We started our 1 acre hop yard. The brewery startup was still one to two years away. In the fall of 2011, Michael Simmons, now our brewmaster, contacted me about Nimble Hill growing hops and the possible brewery. We met and in one Saturday morning meeting put together the business plan for Nimble Hill Brewing Company. After many hours of analyzing what license was right for Nimble Hill we picked the G brewery license over the GP brewpub licenses.

The main reason we wanted the brewpub license was the ability to brew great beer and also sell Pennsylvania produced wine for consumption. The three reasons we decided not to go with the GP is first, having to have a food establishment, second the restrictions of not being able to sell the Pennsylvania wine for off premise consumption and third, we did not want to take on the extra financial burden at startup that the restaurant would have imposed. We wanted to focus on producing great beer.

After some interesting events we received our G license in the spring of 2012. This has made us unique for Pennsylvania due to our two licenses, a Limited Winery and a G brewery license. Unfortunately the two licensees are not able to share facilities.

I propose a change in the Pennsylvania liquor code that would help Pennsylvania breweries and Pennsylvania Limited Wineries. Not only will this help these industries it will also increase tourism, local business revenue and increased tax revenue for the state of Pennsylvania. Consumers are asking for this.

The change I propose is as follows:

With the future possible creation of a Limited Brewery license, allow both Limited Breweries and Limited Wineries the ability to offer tastings , and sales for on or off premise consumption of each others products.

Thank you for your time. I encourage any questions or concerns you may have.

Gary M. Toczko

President

Nimble Hill Vineyard and Winery / Nimble Hill Brewing
Company

