

County's fiscal plan: taxing the pour

Jack Daniel's distillery might face bill for up to \$5 million

By JOE EDWARDS

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO
Visitors view barrels of aging whiskey on a tour of the Jack Daniel's distillery in 2009 in Lynchburg, Tenn. A measure approved by the Moore County Council asks the Tennessee legislature to authorize a local referendum on whether the distillery should pay a tax on each of the 500,000 barrels of whiskey it produces annually.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — For decades, Jack Daniel's whiskey has celebrated its small Tennessee hometown of Lynchburg with folksy, black-and-white advertisements urging folks to slow down and have a sip.

Now local officials want the maker of the world's top-selling whiskey to pay a bigger bar tab as they struggle with their budget. How does up to \$5 million sound?

A measure approved by the Moore County Council asks the Tennessee legislature to authorize a local referendum on whether the distillery should pay that much in new taxes on the 500,000 barrels it fills with whiskey each year.

The 145-year-old distillery, tucked away on 1,700 hilly acres down the road from Lynchburg's town square, now pays \$1.5 million in local property taxes.

If the barrel tax is approved, it would be a huge help to the local government, whose annual budget is \$3 million and would get every last drop, so to speak, of the money.

Distillery officials say they already do their civic and fiscal duty.

"We're paying our part, our fair share," said Tom Beam, senior vice president and general manager of production at the facility.

He said the distillery has helped the area in several ways, including assisting with renovations at the courthouse and a swimming pool.

"We operate as a partner with the county," he said.

He worries such a law would be a terrible precedent for other businesses in the state.

"Other counties could try to do the same thing, attacking businesses. It could be a job killer," he said.

Nevertheless, supporters of the referendum say Jack Daniel's still owes more.

"Lynchburg and the people of Moore County have been involved in the success of the Jack Daniel's brand; the value of the brand worldwide is due in no small measure because they have marketed our town and people successfully," said Charles Rogers, who has led the campaign for the new tax.

The town and Jack Daniel's brand are entwined like few other products. The iconic black-and-white label of Jack's Old No. 7 whiskey even lists Lynchburg's population. The bottle says 361, but the town and county really have about 6,400 people. Ten million cases of the sour mash whiskey, led by Old No. 7, are sold worldwide every year.

"They owe something back to the county," said Rogers, a Lynchburg native and retired executive with the Chrysler Corp.

For those with thirsty throats fearing a retail price increase if the proposal passes, corporate officials would not speculate. But Beam offered this sobering thought: "We'd be out several million dollars a year. We'd have to look to save money."

The proposal will go to the General Assembly early next year. If authorized there, the referendum in the county could take place as early as next November.

Rogers believes it will be a spirited fight in the legislature, but if authorized there, "I feel pretty certain it would pass (locally)."

Two Minnesota women convicted of funneling cash to terror group

By AMY FORLITI

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



CRAIG LASSIG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Hawo Mohamed Hassan, left, and Amina Farah Ali of Rochester, Minn., leave the U.S. District Court in St Paul, Minn., on Aug. 5. They were convicted Thursday of conspiring to fund terrorists in Somalia.

MINNEAPOLIS — Two Minnesota women were convicted Thursday of conspiring to funnel money to a terrorist group in Somalia as part of what prosecutors called a "deadly pipeline" sending money and fighters from the United States to al-Shabab.

The jury deliberated about 20 hours since getting the case at the end of the day Monday.

Amina Farah Ali, 35, and Hawo Mohamed Hassan, 64, were each charged in federal court with conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization. Ali faced 12 counts of providing such support for, authorities alleged, sending more than \$8,600 to the group from September 2008 through July 2009, and Hassan faced two counts of lying to the FBI.

Both were found guilty on all counts. The terrorism-related counts each carry a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison, while each count of lying to the FBI carries up to eight years. No sentencing date was set.

The women, both U.S. citizens of Somali descent, were among 20 people charged in Minnesota's long-running federal investigations into recruiting and financing for al-Shabab, which the United States considers a terrorist group with ties to al-Qaida. Investigators suspect at least 21 men left Minnesota — home to the country's largest Somali community — to join al-Shabab.

Though others have pleaded guilty to related charges, the women were the first to go on trial.

Ali stood before the judge after the verdict and spoke defiantly.

"I am very happy," she said through an interpreter, saying she knew she was going to heaven. She condemned people in authority who accused her of wrongdoing and anyone who is against Muslims, saying, "You will go to hell."

Chief U.S. District Judge Michael Davis ordered her into custody and said she would be detained until her sentencing.

Hassan was taken into custody but will be placed into a halfway house when a bed becomes available. She will be on lockdown and be monitored by GPS. When asked if she had anything to say, she expressed concern about whether she would have to remove her head covering.

Davis said arrangements were made to allow her to keep her head covering on.

Prosecutors say the two women went door-to-door in the name of charity and held religious teleconferences to solicit donations, which they then routed to the

fighters, who many Somalis believed were protecting their homeland from the Ethiopian army, which many saw as invaders.

The government's evidence included hundreds of hours of secretly recorded phone calls, obtained during a 10-month wiretap on Ali's home and cellphone. Prosecutors say the calls, which included talk of fighting in Somalia and sending money to fighters under false pretenses, show the women knew they were doing something illegal.

Defense attorneys say the women are humanitarians, who were giving money to orphans and poor people and a group they felt was working to push foreign troops out of Somalia.

As part of its case, the government had to prove the women knew al-Shabab had been declared a foreign terrorist organization, or that they knew it was engaged in terrorist activity or terrorism.

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