

## New law offers cheap ride-shares for intoxicated riders

State allows beer companies to team up with companies like Lyft and Uber for discounted fares



*Gaslamp Quarter*

On Jan. 1, Assembly Bill 711 went into effect, allowing beer manufacturers to provide consumers with free or discounted rides from transportation companies, such as taxis, and even ride-sharing companies such as Uber and Lyft. The bill, which was introduced by Democratic Assemblymember Evan Low, aims to reduce drunk driving. In a county like San Diego, where drinking options are abundant, it's long overdue that an option like this was available.

However, California is pretty late to the game. More than 44 states already have such a law, according to the office of Assemblymember Low. And in September, Lyft announced it was entering its second year of partnering with Anheuser-Busch. Together the companies offer discounted rides in 10 states, including New York, Colorado and Washington, D.C., according to Lyft's website. The program prompted people to head to Budweiser's Facebook page each week to find a code for two \$10 credits that could be applied to a ride between 5 p.m. and 5 a.m. on Thursdays, Friday or Saturdays.

The vouchers, however, cannot be handed out as an incentive to consume a particular product, such as Budweiser, for example. Still, the fact that both big beer and Lyft were proponents of the bill comes as no surprise. Whether Lyft will be adding California to its list has yet to be publicly announced, but local venue owners are supportive.

"People would enjoy more areas instead of staying in their neighborhoods," says Eric Johnson, co-owner of the Gaslamp bar The Smoking Gun. "Exploring more bars and restaurants. Paying for people to come enjoy your place that usually wouldn't, I can see some positive in that."

However, Rob McShea, part owner and bar manager of Duck Dive, Park 101 and Miss B's Coconut Club, says the law won't make a significant difference in the way his venues treat public safety.

"This law reinforces the ideals that responsible alcohol purveyors try, or have been trying to do for a while now," he says. "I know, personally, we have worked with many different groups in the past to help our patrons get home safe. We have participated with MADD, ride-sharing groups, and local interest groups to decrease drunk driving."

Time will tell whether Assembly Bill 711 is financially feasible for San Diego's small-time brewers, or if this city of beer snobs would vouch for coupons from the likes of Budweiser. None of San Diego's largest breweries, including Karl Strauss, Stone Brewing and Green Flash, commented on their intentions by the time this article went to press.

"In general, I'm not sure if all alcohol purveyors are aware of the new law," says McShea. "But as responsible operators, guest safety should be a priority."