

# Why was a law against making, selling and transporting alcohol

[Law](#)



Settlers within America tended to be idealistic bible-based Protestants wanting to build up a moral society in the new lands. However, in the early 1900's there was a lot of immigration into America from Italy, Germany and Eastern Europe. There was a large black population in the southern states that contributed to the variety of different cultures within America. America was a nation of small towns with close-minded opinions, which contributed to the discrimination of any cultures different to their own.

Americans who had roots there for longer felt the different immigrant's traditions and morals were alien to their own. There were a number of states in America referred to as the " bible belt" located in the southern and south west of America, where there were an extensive amount of fundamentalists following their religious beliefs zealously. Kansas was a specific example of these states because it actually made alcohol illegal in 1880 before any national campaign had begun. Strong religious beliefs aimed towards alcohol and its effect on the drinker were the main issues behind the abhorrence of alcohol.

They believed that it caused antisocial characteristics in people such as alcoholism, drunkenness that led to gambling and violence, disease, abuse of women and children, as well as sin. There were 40 per cent of clergymen that at the time died of alcoholism, which didn't reflect well on the church. This deceptive opinion of the church was felt vehemently because of the religious emphasis on obeying God's law that all the fundamentalist Christians stuck rigidly to. Social reasons like poverty were blamed wholly on alcohol. Immigrants affected these people as well because they were unused to people with different customs.

<https://assignbuster.com/why-was-a-law-against-making-selling-and-transporting-alcohol/>

They felt immigrants threatened their religious, moral community life because they were unprincipled, dangerous and needed education and controlling. The brewers were getting too powerful because of mass production and that advertising beer was wrong because it set up new saloons and encouraged people to drink more, which was not a worthy diversion. Saloonkeeper's opinion affected how their customers voted was another factor about alcohol and its associations, which they did not like. These were the main factors that contributed to the aversion of alcohol and its effect on society that induced people to urge the prohibition of alcohol.

Prohibition began in small towns where the fundamentalists were generally found. There was a tradition within small towns of heavy drinking in liquor saloons and in 1873 Elizabeth Thompson started a campaign. Women picketed saloons and prayed daily in protest of the saloons and the evilness that went on inside them. This method of campaign spread rapidly and the first all women campaign got tied in with the fight for the vote. In 1875 The National Women's Christian Temperance Movement (NWCTM) was set up by Frances Willard, which pressurised the politicians because it was now a serious issue with a lot of support behind them.

The propaganda used by their campaign was linked prohibition with motherhood, purity, peace and temperance: drink with slums, child poverty and child labour presenting the immense contrast of the concepts. The vote for women was linked to saloons because men in bars made political decisions that women couldn't share in making the affair undemocratic. The

exclusion from important decision was unfair and corrupt towards women and this point would have appealed to a lot more women.

Carrie Nations made the NWCTU more notorious by her unrestrained method of protest involving: entering saloons and smashing the place up and because she was a woman the police wouldn't hold her for more than one night, so she could re-commit her offence without any hazardous conclusions. The consequence of the campaign was so enormous that the whole country heard about it, promoting their ideas. This meant that because of the liberal amount of publicity their views were given that it spread fast and states were prohibiting alcohol because of the gain in support.

This campaign was boosted by the support of businessmen who started the Anti-Saloon League because they wanted sober, reliable workers in their businesses to increase production. Though many big cities were anti-temperance Henry Ford was a fanatic of the concept and he wanted sober, efficient workers; who would if they spent less money on drink; could then buy more cars; increasing his profits. He introduced the methods such as: sacking any drunken workers; a social services department to check his workers homes for alcohol; employed physical exercise and English lessons for any immigrant workers.

Other industrialists copied Ford's tactics and prohibition became a national campaign. The Anti-Saloon League was more effective than the NWCTU because it was well organised; with monthly subscriptions; paid professional staff and effective use of propaganda that linked prohibition with freedom,

<https://assignbuster.com/why-was-a-law-against-making-selling-and-transporting-alcohol/>

equality and Christianity; press coverage encouraged support from other successful businessmen. Pledged votes from its members to politicians, who then made the states "dry" increased the influence of their campaign more than the NWCTU because of the powerful people involved.

It was so dominant that in 1908 Ohio State in spite of having a huge brewing industry voted to go Democratic and dry. Politicians realised they had to take note of this development. A key member of the Anti-Saloon League was a legal advisor called Wayne Wheeler (The Dry Boss) because he established the headquarters in Washington and launched the initial campaign to get Congress to make prohibition national in 1913. He used various ploys such as the Great War and the German-American brewers to inspire a patriotic message in his publicity. In 1916 the Congressional Election showed 19 states had voted for "dry" congressmen.

The influential support of important businessmen increased the significance of the campaign and made it a national debate, which would eventually lead to a national law against alcohol. The effect of the Great War was to the advantage of the campaigners for prohibition. They could use it as more ammunition for use in propaganda: for instance soldiers would fight better if alcohol didn't divert them. Propaganda such as this was used to inspire patriotic ideas in people because it was during the period that America got involved in the Great War and using the idea of being patriotic promoted prohibition.

Wheeler attacked the distilleries on the grounds that grain used in beer making was just wasted when it could be put to better use for making food.

<https://assignbuster.com/why-was-a-law-against-making-selling-and-transporting-alcohol/>

Congress banned distilling. He then targeted the saloon by pronouncing that German-American brewers were associated with Germany and the Kaiser: who were seen as the enemy to enforce prohibition even more. After this men in uniform were forbidden to enter saloons at home or abroad. Political reasons for prohibitions growth was that politicians ran on the dry vote using the support of campaigns like the NWCTU and Anti-Saloon League.

This was because the many people were somehow linked to the cause including women, businessmen and religious groups. Women were a large group of people who supported prohibition and because they had just gained the vote were now influential at election time. I conclude that the most important cause that led to a law against the making, selling and transporting of alcohol passed in 1919 was due to the obligation that the Politicians were placed under from the pressure of the campaigners for national "dryness".

There was an almost definite certainty that they would be elected if they ran on the "dry" vote this affected the ultimate cause of their campaign slogans to solicit more votes. Politicians in Congress had the power to decide whether or not a law should be passed: if they didn't feel a lot of people supported the cause or that it just wouldn't work then ultimately they wouldn't have passed it. This cause links other reasons to why it was politicians actually passed the law concerning prohibition.

The two main campaigners the NWCTU and the Anti Saloon League influenced the Politicians decisions because they contained influential people whose opinions were valued because of their success in business and the

<https://assignbuster.com/why-was-a-law-against-making-selling-and-transporting-alcohol/>

immense amount of support that they seemed to hold, which would guarantee votes from "dry" people. However, this law wasn't successful because the majority of people who voted for it did not really endorse the entire scheme. They voted for a law against prohibition because it was principled and they didn't want to disagree with the rest of the community, who appeared to support the cause.