PLCB’s Mishandling of COVID-19

Timeline of Blunders

- March 17, 2020
  - The PLCB effectively ends all sale of liquor in the state by closing all state stores and ending online sales.
- March 18, 2020
  - Limited online sales begin, and the website is unable to handle the traffic. The PLCB implemented a lottery-like randomization to determine who can access the website. Only about 1 in 330 customers could successfully access the site.
- April 20, 2020
  - Limited curbside pick-up is offered, but only at 176 of almost 600 stores. However, customers might as well try their luck with the website lottery. It took one man 159 phone calls in order to finally place an order for pick-up with the PLCB.
- May 1, 2020
  - PennLive reported on a backdoor link that allowed website users in the know to bypass the randomized lottery and access the site nearly 100% of the time.

Border Bleed

- Reason Magazine reported how liquor stores in New Jersey had to close their doors after a flood of Pennsylvania customers pushed the stores over their safe occupancy levels.
- Ohio and West Virginia are refusing to sell alcohol to Pennsylvania residents in counties that border the state.
- Police in Delaware set up a check point to discourage Pennsylvania residents driving into the state from purchasing alcohol.

Other States

- While Pennsylvania restaurants lost revenue waiting for the ability to sell drinks to-go (the law was finally signed on May 21, 2020), places like D.C., New York City, Ohio, and Texas not only implemented this change but are now considering making it permanent.
- Online wine ordering sites saw sales increase following COVID-19 by over 500%. Unfortunately, Pennsylvanians are limited in their selection, as direct wine shipping must be licensed by the PLCB.