

## State requires alcohol server training

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**By Jo Dee Black 12/30/11**

After six years tending bar at The Classic 50s in Great Falls, Kelly Gilligan has plenty of experience under his belt when it comes to watching out for patrons who've had too much to drink.

But after the 2011 state Legislature passed a new law requiring all employees who serve alcohol to take an approved training class covering liability laws and techniques to prevent overserving of alcoholic beverages, he took the Training for Intervention Procedures sponsored by the Cascade County Tavern Association.

"I was already aware of the responsibilities businesses have, but I still learned a lot, and it is was good to have peers to talk to — to bounce ideas off of," Gilligan said.

His experience is typical, said John Hayes, director of the Cascade County Tavern Association.

"Most people who go through the class say they learn something new — exactly what the liability laws are and techniques to use on the job to prevent overserving," he said.

The tavern association has long offered the TIPS training locally. Insurance carriers offer a discount to businesses that require their employees go through the training.

"It's to the point where many insurance companies don't want to carry a business unless their employees have gone through the training," Hayes said.

The 2011 Legislature passed Senate Bill 29, which requires all employees who sell and serve alcohol go through an approved training program. New employees must be trained within 60 days of being hired.

Supporters of the law say it will help in the fight to reduce drunken driving. Oregon saw an 11 percent reduction in fatal alcohol-related crashes after server training was mandated in that state.

Montana Tavern Association Attorney Mark Staples said having one law that applies to the industry statewide, instead of a patchwork of different rules from county to county, was the preferred option.

"Now we have a reasonable standard in place that is uniform," Staples said. "The Department of Revenue has a registry of accepted programs, which was very important for more rural areas. We wanted to make sure there were some online options for people.

"The major change in Montana now is that the training that was once optional is now mandatory."