There's No Free Beer After All

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Perhaps it was too good to be true. Or perhaps the state frowns on this sort of thing. Whatever the case, the free beer promotion on Era Alaska flights has been modified, and no longer includes free beer. Under the old promotion the first sample of Denali Brewing Company's "Single Engine Red," was free, but each additional 6-ounce glass cost $3. The new promotion charges a dollar for the first one and each additional glass.

Micah Lillard, Era's marketing manager, explains:

"Well we ran into some unforeseen challenges that we weren't expecting. So we have gone ahead and decided to charge for the first one and lower any additional samples after that."

The unforeseen challenge, according to Alcoholic Beverage Control Board Director Shirley Gifford, was a state pricing and marketing statute that prohibits offering or delivering free alcoholic beverages as a marketing tool.

"We'd gotten wind of it yesterday and I saw it on the news last night and of course it

created some questions for us. And working with Era, they decided they would just go ahead and charge for the beer."

Lillard would not comment on why Era made the move to charge a small price for the beer, but it seems to be voluntary as a courtesy to the state, because, as Gifford points out, there is no federal law against giving away free beer:

"While they're on the ground they have to abide by Alaska law, but federal law preempts state law in the air. So if there's a grey area, Era's going to err on the side of caution with that. So I think they're fine. They're okay. I mean we don't see that they're violating with what they had planned to do."

The no-longer free beer promotion is scheduled to expire at the end of the month, but Lillard said Era will consider extending it into July. The service is only available on Era's Dash 8 aircraft flying between Anchorage and Fairbanks, Deadhorse, Homer, and Kodiak.