
LAS VEGAS SUN

SUN EDITORIAL:

Hunger takes a hit

Newly amended state law allows for peace of mind in donating perishable food

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The act of bakeries and restaurants habitually throwing out tons of unsold, perishable food while people go hungry has always been one of the perversities of community life. But the reason for it has been understandable in our litigious society — donated food that can spoil carries the risk of a lawsuit if someone gets sick after eating it.

Well, no more — at least in Nevada after an amendment to a law takes effect July 1.

The Legislature this session passed Assembly Bill 332, which provides legal protection to businesses that give away properly handled perishable food deemed no longer salable but perfectly edible.

In writing about the bill last week, the Associated Press gave much credit for the amendment to Kathia Pereira, a lawyer. Her husband is a baker whose customers include Strip hotels. Pereira, reluctantly, had always advised her husband to discard the bakery's leftovers.

She helped draft the bill, which was sponsored by Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop, D-Las Vegas. "We want to give, but we want to give without fear," Pereira told the AP, adding that the recession is what increased her motivation to encourage more food donations.

State law had offered protections to donors of nonperishable foods, but fresh foods left over from restaurant/bakery sales or casino banquets, buffets and wedding receptions were not covered.

Gov. Jim Gibbons signed the bill May 6 and it becomes law July 1. The law is careful to say the food must be donated in good faith, that it must be fit for human use and that legal protections do not apply wherever gross negligence or willful misconduct is involved.

This amendment to state law has the potential to greatly expand food donations throughout Nevada. Owing to Pereira's initiative and the state's embrace of her idea, the urgent problem of hunger for tens of thousands of people will at least be diminished if restaurants take advantage of their new opportunity.

We hope they all do.

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