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French Senate Backs Higher Premix Tax on Sweet Alcoholic Drinks Up to 25% Strength

The measure targets canned cocktails like Vody that critics say encourage heavy drinking among young consumers

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The French Senate approved an amendment on Thursday, Nov. 12, that would broaden a special tax on premixed alcoholic drinks to cover beverages with up to 25% alcohol by volume, a move aimed at products such as Vody, a canned drink that mixes strong alcohol with sugar and flavorings and has drawn concern over its popularity among young consumers.

The measure was adopted during the Senate's examination of France's 2027 Social Security budget. It was introduced by the Socialist group and passed despite opposition from the government. Under current rules, the so-called premix tax applies to sweetened alcoholic ready-to-drink beverages only up to 12% alcohol, a threshold that lawmakers backing the amendment say no longer reflects the products now being sold in France.

The senators' proposal would raise that ceiling from 12% to 25%. In practice, that would bring into the tax net canned drinks such as Vody and other similar products that currently avoid the levy when they do not contain energy-stimulant ingredients. According to the amendment, the tax would apply at 11 euros per deciliter of pure alcohol.

Supporters of the change say the French market has exposed gaps in the existing system. In their amendment, Socialist senators said the arrival of Vody showed the limits of the current framework. The drinks are made in Germany by Cody’s Drink and sold in 250-milliliter cans. They combine spirits such as vodka or gin with large amounts of sugar and flavorings, and in some versions may also include substances such as taurine or caffeine, along with other additives. Their alcohol content typically ranges from 18% to 22%, and lawmakers said they remain relatively affordable.

The senators argued that the drinks encourage rapid and excessive alcohol consumption and carry significant health risks. They also said the products remain particularly attractive because of their low price. The amendment is part of a broader push in France to address concerns about sweet, high-alcohol beverages that are easy to consume and marketed in ways critics say appeal strongly to younger buyers.

Those concerns have been especially visible in France’s overseas territories. BFM Business reported that Vody and similar drinks have become popular among young consumers, particularly in the French Caribbean. Their festive image, ready-to-drink format and marketing have helped drive demand, according to lawmakers backing the measure. Social media challenges promoting binge drinking have also circulated around the products.

In May 2025, Olivier Serva, a lawmaker from Guadeloupe, said the drinks had played a role in several road accidents. He described one 250-milliliter can as the equivalent of four vodka shots consumed in a row. In Côte d’Ivoire, Vody drinks have been banned since 2023.

The debate did not begin this month. In December 2025, a parliamentary report led by Yannick Neuder, a member of the conservative Republicans who later served as health minister, and Socialist lawmaker Sandrine Ruel said it was necessary to extend the premix tax to all ready-to-drink alcoholic beverages above 12% alcohol. The report described the drinks as harmful to health and said they were especially present among young people in more vulnerable areas, including low-income neighborhoods and overseas territories.

French lawmakers had already moved in that direction in the 2026 budget, when they expanded the tax to cover sweetened alcoholic drinks containing energy substances regardless of alcohol strength. But drinks with alcohol levels between 18% and 25% that do not contain those ingredients can still avoid the tax. That remains the case for many products in the Vody range, according to the report cited by BFM Business.

Backers of the new amendment say that problem reflects a broader weakness in a tax system built around a growing list of product characteristics. They argue that producers can continue to market new beverages based on the same commercial logic while adjusting ingredients enough to stay outside the existing rules. Raising the threshold to 25%, they said, would not only cover products already on the market but also help anticipate similar drinks that may appear later.

The proposal could matter beyond the specific brands now under scrutiny. If it survives the legislative process, it could raise prices for high-strength ready-to-drink cocktails and put pressure on spirits producers to reformulate some products, absorb higher tax costs or adjust their portfolios. It could also reopen a wider debate in France over how alcoholic beverages are classified and taxed when they blur the line between spirits, cocktails and flavored drinks.

Not everyone in the Senate supported the amendment. Micheline Jacques, a Republican senator from Saint Barthélemy, warned that the broader tax could hurt the rum sector in overseas territories. She said it would threaten many kinds of products, including infused rums, planter’s punch and cocktails.

The amendment’s future remains uncertain. Because it is part of the 2027 budget process, it still must pass through the remaining stages of the parliamentary review before it can take effect, and there is no guarantee it will remain in the final version of the bill.