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Congress Moves to Tighten Wine Origin Labels

The proposal would require clearer disclosure of where grapes were grown and where wine was made.

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A proposal in Congress would require wine labels to say more clearly where the grapes were grown and where the wine was made, a change that could affect how American wineries use imported bulk wine and how consumers understand what is in the bottle.

The measure, which has drawn attention from producers and regulators, comes as some wineries have relied on foreign bulk wine to lower costs or fill supply gaps while still selling bottles under U.S. labels. Supporters of the proposal say the current system can leave shoppers with an incomplete picture of origin, especially when wine is blended, bottled or finished in the United States after arriving from abroad.

The legislation would tighten labeling rules so that origin claims are easier to verify and harder to obscure. That could matter most for wines sold under American place names or marketed as domestic products even when part of the liquid came from outside the country. Industry groups that favor stronger disclosure say clearer labels would help protect consumers and domestic growers. Others in the wine business worry that stricter rules could raise compliance costs and limit flexibility for wineries that depend on imported bulk wine to keep prices down.

The debate reflects a broader tension in the U.S. wine market between transparency and cost. Bulk imports have become an important part of the supply chain for some large producers, particularly as climate pressures, harvest swings and changing demand have made sourcing more complicated. At the same time, lawmakers and consumer advocates have pushed for labels that better distinguish between wines made entirely from U.S. grapes and those assembled from multiple sources.

Federal labeling rules already require certain origin statements, but critics say they do not always make it easy for buyers to tell where a wine truly comes from. The proposal would add more specificity, giving regulators a stronger basis to review claims on bottles sold across state lines.

The issue has also gained urgency because wine labels carry marketing weight far beyond legal compliance. A bottle marked with an American appellation can command higher prices and stronger shelf appeal than one identified as imported or blended. For wineries that buy bulk wine overseas and bottle it domestically, any new rule could force changes in packaging, sourcing or branding.

The measure is expected to face pushback from parts of the industry that argue existing disclosures are enough and that consumers care more about taste and price than production details. But supporters say clearer origin labeling is overdue in a

market where the line between domestic and imported wine can be harder to see than many shoppers realize.