BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) - Rep. Donald Ray Kennard didn't need a fortune teller to let him know his anti-drinking bill was in trouble after he got opposition from a part-time Baptist minister.

The Rev. Avery Alexander of New Orleans was one of 10 members of the House Committee on the Judiciary to vote Monday to defer action on the Baton Rouge lawmaker's bill to close down bars earlier. Deferral is another method to kill a bill.

Alexander asked Kennard if he was willing to exempt New Orleans from the bill. The preacher-real estate broker said such a law would cripple the tourist business.

In addition, people in Alexander's district like to get drunk, too, he told Kennard.

Kennard wanted to close bars from midnight to 6 a.m. except in New Orleans where they would be allowed to stay open until 2 a.m.

Most members of the committee said bar closing hours should be left up to local governments.

Rep. Bruce Bolin of Minden, chairman of the panel, said people in his district didn't want bars open at all but that he didn't want the entire state to have to bend to the will of his own people.

He was successful with an amendment to make New Orleans come in line with the rest of the state. The amendment also would close all bars from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

"In my area we have just as much problem with people going to lunch in Bossier City and coming back to work drunk," said Bolin. "Maybe this amendment will stop the four martini lunch."

The committee accepted the amendment, apparently as a means of showing its distaste for the entire bill.

Kennard, the author of several bills relating to drunk driving, said he only wanted to keep the drinking drivers from the road.

"They can always buy it earlier by the case and go to house parties," said Rep. Harry Kember of White Castle. "I think we ought to allow the local governments do make those decisions."

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