



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on December 19, 2022

Virginia Restaurateur Fights State's Democrat-controlled ABC to a Standstill

Virginia's Democrat-controlled Alcoholic Beverage Commission (ABC) [finally decided to cut its losses and caved on Wednesday](#).

On Dec. 2, a gaggle of ABC agents and Virginia state troopers had descended on Matt Strickland's restaurant, Gourmeltz, and Strickland recorded it all on his iPhone.

For once, *The Washington Post* got it right:

On the morning of Dec. 2, as agents with the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Commission boxed up bottles from the bar at Gourmeltz in Fredericksburg, Va., owner Matt Strickland took out his phone and began recording. He pointed his camera at the ABC agents, along with the Virginia state troopers who accompanied them, and accused them all of supporting tyranny. He questioned their loyalty to country and the constitution. He questioned their manhood.

"What you're doing right now is government overreach. What you're doing right now is supporting a tyrannical government," Strickland told the officers as he panned his phone around the room. "The Constitution means more to me than my self-preservation. If any of you guys had the b--- to stand up and say that, and fight for that, this would not be going on right now."

When the agents responded that they're simply executing a lawful search warrant, Strickland compared them to former Nazi officers who, during the Nuremberg trials, said they were just following orders. "So many people were just doing their job for



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Hitler back in Germany,” he told the agents and troopers, their faces as still as stone.

After seizing all of his alcoholic beverages, they informed Strickland that he was closed until January 31, 2023.

The public, which recently had tossed the state’s Democratic governor and his attorney general, rallied, and on Wednesday the ABC announced its “settlement” with Strickland:

Virginia ABC and Gourmeltz LLC have entered into a Consent Agreement resolving all issues associated with the serving of alcohol products without the requisite license to do so at the restaurant.

Effective December 23, 2022, the mixed beverage and wine and beer licenses of Gourmeltz will be reinstated.

The ABC managed to squeeze a CYA out of Strickland:

It is understood and agreed by the Parties that the Consent Agreement and related obligations are neither an admission nor denial of liability or wrongdoing on the part of any of the Parties.

Nothing was said about the legal fees Strickland has incurred, estimated in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Nothing was said about the state’s Department of Health backing down after Strickland fought them in court. Nothing was said about the commission being staffed with Democratic holdovers from Democratic Governor Ralph Northam’s administration that put them onto the commission.

The backstory is this: Strickland is a former military serviceman, serving in Iraq and Afghanistan for more than 15 years. Upon leaving he started a melted-cheese-sandwich business out of a truck. In two years his business grew to the point where he decided to open a retail location.

Things went swimmingly until March 2020. Then, using Covid as an excuse, Virginia Democrats issued all manner of decrees, mandates, and demands. Masks were required for both his staff and his customers. His seating capacities were limited. Social distancing was required. Even bartenders had to follow strange and convoluted rules. Explained Strickland:

My bartender couldn’t serve a customer across the counter at the bar.

He could make a drink right in front of him though, but then he had to walk around the bar and serve it to them side by side.

Just stuff like that just didn’t make any sense, so it seemed to be more about control than our health and safety.

After 90 days of this silliness Strickland fought back, and incurred the wrath of the health department.

As Strickland explained:



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We took it all the way. I mean they tried to settle with me on several different occasions saying, “hey man, instead of X amount of dollars and suspension of your license, just give us a quarter of that and we’ll make it go away.”

I declined every settlement that they sent me and we took it all the way to court and we won and we got our health department license back.

Not so quickly the ABC. It apparently was determined to make a point: “thou shalt not resist the state.” But reality set in, and they finally settled.

Strickland isn’t done, not by a long shot. He is now running for the Virginia state Senate. When asked if he was going to run as a Republican, he scoffed, reminding reporters that none of the Republicans in office stood by him while the battle was raging, though they were only too happy to support him and the cause of freedom after he’d won. Said Strickland: “My loyalty is to America, and that’s it.”



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