Outdoor dining in Pennsylvania was always a novelty, but it became more common during the COVID-19 pandemic. This phenomenon highlighted a long-standing issue for restaurants that wanted to complement a customer’s experience with music.

Unfortunately, in the past, state law prohibited any sound beyond the property line.
Put differently, even the slightest pin drop heard beyond a licensed establishment’s property line could have resulted in fines and/or citations.

This system is no more. On July 11, 2022, Gov. Tom Wolf signed into law a Liquor Code Amendment that permits licensed establishments to play “the sound of music or other entertainment” that is audible beyond the property line so long as the sound is no louder than 75 decibels. The amended law applies throughout the state except in the counties of Philadelphia and Allegheny.

For comparison, the sound of a vacuum cleaner is approximately 75 decibels.

The new 75-decibel limit, effective immediately, applies only between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays and between 10 a.m. and noon Fridays and Saturdays. After these hours, the original restrictions remain in place.

The Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement of the Pennsylvania State Police will enforce the provisions of the amended law, which contains no additional regulations or guidance. It remains to be seen how enforcement develops and what technology is used to ensure compliance with the law.

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