

Tempe Tavern – Public Statement

The news this week about the tragic death of a young man on Rural Road is terrible. The gravity of this cannot be and should not be undersold. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families involved. Tempe Tavern found out about this accident from a post on the Tempe Police Department's Instagram account. Had we been contacted, as we have in the past for numerous other investigations in the area, we would have done what we always do: share information and video footage with the police and investigators. We could have confirmed the suspect's presence in the bar and potentially her purchase history. And yet, three months later, we have not been contacted by Tempe Police.

Our Record of Cooperation and Compliance

Tempe Tavern has always worked in good faith with Tempe Police, city code enforcement, and the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control.

- When city code compliance initiated enforcement actions (coincidentally the same week as the first raid in April) on multiple properties in our area, we were the only business to fully comply.
- During the first unprecedented raid earlier this year, no Tempe Police citations were issued, and liquor violations were limited to a single instance involving a 21-year-old.
- Over the years, we have spoken often with Liquor Board officials about the increasing sophistication of fake IDs—an issue affecting every bar in a college town. During our most recent discussion in June, a compliance officer told us directly:

“You’re in a college town, and this happens everywhere. You’re doing the best you can.”

Every protocol we use today—including ID procedures, security placement, scanner usage, and floor-monitoring practices—was adopted in coordination with Tempe Police suggestions. Liquor Board detectives and compliance officers have repeatedly stated that Tempe Tavern is one of the most organized bars they have encountered. Our routine compliance checks, as well as those conducted under pressure during these raids, have shown us to be fully compliant with Title 4 liquor laws.

Capacity and Volume Challenges

We acknowledge that Tempe Tavern often operates at a high volume, particularly during ASU-related weekends, events, and peak nights. While we have maintained compliance during

inspections, we recognize that managing capacity in real time remains one of the most difficult operational challenges for any popular establishment.

We take this seriously.

We are actively reviewing staffing, entry/exit monitoring, real-time counter systems, and other safeguards to enhance how we manage large crowds. We welcome any partnership from the City or Tempe Police that supports safe, transparent, and effective approaches to capacity management that don't rely on surprise SWAT-style operations.

Selective Enforcement Remains a Concern

Two large-scale enforcement raids—six months apart—were conducted at Tempe Tavern alone. No similar operations appear to have been conducted at any other Tempe establishments, despite the fact that fake IDs and high-volume crowds are common throughout the city.

Between the raids:

- We received no notice of concerns from Tempe Police or the Liquor Board.
- We were not contacted about any ongoing investigations.
- We were not asked for video or receipts related to the recent tragic incident, even though we routinely assist police in investigations—most recently last week when our video footage led to an arrest after a theft in our parking lot.

The second raid in November resulted in no substantive violations; we were informed only that a security staff member wore a sweatshirt over a security shirt—something that normally warrants, at most, a simple warning. Again, we learned details from a police Instagram post rather than through official communication.

Media Reporting, Public Perception, and Misinformation

Recent reporting has amplified confusion and public misunderstanding about the enforcement operations at Tempe Tavern. Unfortunately, several incorrect claims circulated widely long before Tempe Tavern was given any opportunity to clarify the facts.

First, multiple news outlets reported that “249 arrests” were made during the November operation.

This is **inaccurate**.

- The figure reported publicly came from the number of **citations**, not arrests. Many individuals received **multiple citations**.
- According to the police reports, **only three people were arrested, transported and booked**.
- Tempe Tavern was never given a total headcount for that evening, never issued a related citation, and learned of the “arrests” figure **solely through the Tempe Police Instagram post**.

Second, coverage of the recent hit-and-run incident has implied—directly or indirectly—that the driver was intoxicated after having been at Tempe Tavern.

This is also **inaccurate**.

- According to publicly available information, the driver **was not cited for DUI** or for being under the influence.
- The media’s framing has encouraged viewers to assume otherwise, despite no evidence or charges supporting that conclusion.

Tempe Tavern was never contacted by investigators about this case, even though we maintain detailed ID logs and video footage that could have confirmed the individual’s presence and activity. **Nearly three months have now passed**, and not once has Tempe Police—or any investigative agency—approached us, requested evidence, or asked a single question. Given our long history of cooperation, it is reasonable to ask why no contact was made.

Finally, news segments and online commentary almost always overlook a critical fact: **fake IDs today are sophisticated enough to defeat nearly every verification method available to bars, banks, and other types of business**.

Modern fraudulent IDs:

- Scan correctly
- Contain accurate barcode data
- Include holograms and blacklight features
- Are marketed openly through WhatsApp, Telegram, and numerous websites

As reported recently by AZCentral’s Austin Walker, these vendors remove virtually all barriers to obtaining convincing fake identification. This is a *statewide and nationwide* problem—not a Tempe Tavern issue, and not one any bar can solve alone.

Tempe Tavern welcomes accurate reporting, community dialogue, and fair scrutiny. What we hope to avoid is the spread of misinformation that harms public understanding, undermines trust, and unfairly damages the reputation of a business that has consistently complied with Title 4, cooperated with law enforcement, and served the community responsibly.

A Better Way Forward: Collaboration, Not Raids

Fake IDs are not just a Tempe Tavern problem—they are a citywide, statewide, and nationwide problem for any venue serving adults in a college community. Today's IDs are sophisticated, scannable, and increasingly difficult to detect.

To truly protect the public, enforcement must shift from punitive shows of force to collaborative strategies, including:

- Real-time shared alerts between police and bars when fraudulent IDs or specific individuals are detected
- Coordinated education campaigns aimed at students and underage residents
- Scheduled compliance walkthroughs rather than militarized raids

Tempe Tavern stands ready to participate in any effort that improves safety and reduces underage access. We want to be part of the solution, and we believe collaboration is more effective than isolated enforcement events that do not meaningfully address the root causes.

What We Are Asking For

We are not asking for special treatment.

We are asking for fairness, transparency, and equal enforcement across Tempe.

We remain committed to:

- Full compliance with Title 4
- Improving capacity management
- Enhancing ID verification processes
- Supporting public safety efforts in a cooperative, community-focused way
- Maintaining open communication with law enforcement—whenever they choose to engage with us

Tempe Tavern has served this community for years with integrity, transparency, and a genuine commitment to safety. We will continue to honor that responsibility. All we ask is for consistent standards, constructive dialogue, and a fair approach for all establishments in Tempe.