

NAS REPORT BACKGROUND:

Relevant Links:

August 2003 Washington Report: <http://www.cspinet.org/booze/WashingtonRpt0308.htm#NAS>
NAS Report Webpage: http://www.bocyf.org/Underage_Drinking.html

- Congressional sponsors of legislation to create a National Media Campaign to Prevent Underage Drinking (H.R. 1509/S. 866) in the 107th Congress secured report language and \$500,000 in the FY2002 Labor HHS appropriations bill for a study by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to develop a cost-effective national strategy to prevent underage drinking.
- The origins of the study date back several years to repeated Congressional attempts to establish a media campaign to address underage alcohol use. The NAS formed a committee of alcohol-prevention, communications, and public-health experts to conduct the study, and convened a series of meetings last fall to solicit public and expert input.
- Fearing that the report will recommend remedies the industry strongly opposes, such as tax increases and restrictions on advertising, the National Beer Wholesalers' Association (NBWA) has aggressively sought to undermine the study and attack its credibility even before the report's release. The brewers' attack included a letter to the NAS director, signed by 134 members of Congress, essentially warning the NAS/IOM against including any findings that would be detrimental to the brewing industry.
- Alcohol (beer in particular) is by far the number-one drug of choice for youth, and it kills six times more young people than all illicit drugs combined.¹ Yet, federal efforts to prevent and reduce underage drinking have been sorely under-funded, woefully fragmented, fundamentally invisible, and largely ineffective.
- The federal government's efforts to combat illicit drugs are backed by a well-funded, cohesive, publicly articulated national drug-control strategy. That strategy is coordinated by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), an executive-department agency that reports directly to the President. Since the mid-1990s, Congress has appropriated billions of dollars to that agency, including hundreds of millions of dollars for a national Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. Nothing remotely resembling such a concerted effort has ever existed to address underage drinking, or alcohol abuse.
- Numerous obstacles have thwarted the creation of a comprehensive, highly focused, clearly identified, and hard-hitting federal effort to address underage drinking.
- The NBWA lobbied extensively to exclude alcohol messages from the ONDCP's billion-

¹ Grunbaum, J.A., Kann, L., Kinchen, S.A., Williams, B., Ross, J.G., Lowry, R. & Kolbe, L. (2002). Youth risk behavior surveillance: United States, 2001. In: *Surveillance Summaries*, June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51(No. SS-4): 1-62. Young, S.E., Corley, R.P., Stallings, M.C., Rhee, S.H., Crowley, T.J. & Hewitt, J.K. (2002). Substance use, abuse and dependence in adolescence: Prevalence, symptom profiles and correlates. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. 68(3):309-322.

dollar Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. As a result, the nation's largest and most visible tax-payer-funded youth anti-substance abuse campaign maintains a virtual silence on America's number-one youth drug problem.

- Congressional debate on whether to include alcohol messages in the ONDCP campaign reflected strong support of -- and recognition of the need for -- an underage drinking prevention campaign to raise awareness of that problem and deliver prevention messages to young people, parents, community leaders, and public health and safety officials.
- Numerous members of Congress recognized the incongruity of spending hundreds of millions of dollars to prevent illicit drug use, while ignoring underage alcohol use, widely recognized as the far more devastating, severe, and widespread drug problem for young Americans.
- Report language in the FY 2002 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill provided \$500,000 for the NAS/IOM to develop a strategy to reduce and prevent underage drinking.²
- The provision calling for the NAS study derives from proposed legislation to establish a National Media Campaign to Prevent Underage Drinking (H.R. 1509 and S. 866 in the 107th Congress).³
- That legislation called for the establishment of a discrete media campaign focused on preventing/reducing underage drinking. The program would be housed in the Department of Health and Human Services.
- A broad array of public health and safety groups backed the bills, including the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug

² The language and funding was included in the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002 (P.L. 107-116):

"The conference agreement includes \$500,000 for the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine (NAS/IOM) to develop a cost-effective strategy for reducing and preventing underage drinking. To help develop a cost-effective strategy for reducing and preventing underage drinking, the NAS/IOM shall review existing Federal, State and non-governmental programs, including media-based programs, designed to change the attitudes and health behaviors of youth. Based on its review, the NAS/IOM shall produce a strategy designed to prevent and reduce underage drinking including: an outline and implementation strategy, message points that will be effective in changing the attitudes and health behaviors of youth concerning underage drinking, target audience identification, goals and objectives of the campaign, and the estimated costs of development and implementation."

³ Those bills, in relevant part, direct the Secretary of HHS to:

"... develop and submit to the Congress a comprehensive strategy that identifies the nature and extent of the problem of underage drinking, the scientific basis for the strategy, including a review of the existing scientific research, target audiences, goals and objectives of the campaign, message points that will be effective in changing attitudes and behavior, a campaign outline and implementation plan, an evaluation plan, and the estimated costs of implementation."

Dependence (NCADD), Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), the American Medical Association (AMA), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Consumer Federation of America, National Latino Council on Alcohol & Tobacco, the Trauma Foundation, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as the Advertising Council and the National Partnership for a Drug-Free America. Countless local and statewide groups also supported the measure. The bi-partisan bills garnered 82 co-sponsors in the House and 18 in the Senate.

September 4, 2003