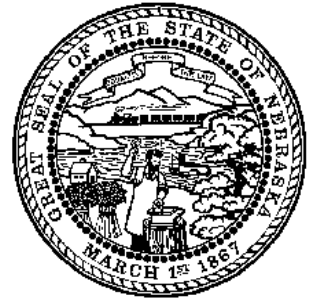




UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN
3rd DISTRICT, NEBRASKA

TOM OSBORNE



For Immediate Release
Wednesday, February 16, 2005

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Rep. Osborne Reintroduces Bill to Tackle Problem of Underage Drinking

Washington, D.C.— Rep. Osborne, along with his colleagues in the House and Senate, reintroduced the STOP (Sober Truth on Preventing) Underage Drinking Act in the 109th Congress today. The STOP Underage Drinking Act builds on key recommendations included in a report released by the Institute of Medicine and the National Academy of Science, (NAS): “Reducing Underage Drinking—A Collective Responsibility.”

“It is devastating that in many cases it takes the loss of life for some to recognize the severity of the problems associated with alcohol abuse. As a society, we can no longer have a complacent attitude toward underage drinking if we want to stop the increased risk of harm that lasts well beyond our youth’s adolescent years. We owe it to our youth and the communities in which we live to tackle these problems before they worsen. The STOP Underage Drinking bill is a strong step forward in the right direction.”

“The Government Accountability Office states that the federal government spends \$1.8 billion annually to combat youth drug use, but spends only \$71 million to prevent underage alcohol use. Yet, alcohol causes six times more deaths than those related to all other drugs combined. As we look for ways to curb this problem, it is very important that the work done by the federal government is proactive. Implementing cost-effective solutions, which focus on prevention, is the key rather than allowing the costs associated with alcohol abuse to continue to escalate.”

The STOP Underage Drinking Act establishes federal coordination and reporting among agencies involved; authorizes a national media campaign against underage drinking; provides additional resources to prevent underage drinking; and expands research and collects new data on underage drinking. Rep. Osborne played an integral role in drafting the legislation last year with Senators Mike DeWine,

Christopher Dodd, and Representatives Rosa DeLauro, Lucille Royball-Allard, Zach Wamp, and Frank Wolf.

The legislation also includes a provision, similar to a stand-alone bill that Rep. Osborne introduced in the 108th Congress, that calls on the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and its member colleges and universities to uphold their commitment to discouraging alcohol use among underage students and other young fans by ending all alcohol advertising during radio and television broadcasts of collegiate sporting events.

“I am pleased the STOP Underage Drinking Act includes a provision that discourages colleges and universities from continuing to take money from beer companies whose ads glamorize drinking and target a youthful audience, and then devoting time, energy, and resources in their fight to prevent the same students from engaging in underage and binge drinking. As long as students continue to learn and grow in this type of an environment, colleges and universities will continue to face an uphill battle in eliminating the ‘drink to get drunk’ mentality prevalent among nearly half of college students. Something must be done, and a commitment by the NCAA and member organizations to stop airing alcohol ads is a step in the right direction.”

Rep. Osborne remarked on the prevalence of alcohol abuse in Nebraska, **“I am particularly saddened when the unnecessary and tragic deaths due to alcohol consumption impact the lives of our youth and their families in Nebraska. As the 2001 State and National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) report noted, Nebraska continues to have some of the highest reported rates of high risk and underage alcohol use in the nation.”**

According to the survey, Nebraska youth ranked third in the nation in binge drinking, with nearly 40 percent of the state’s high school students reporting they had engaged in binge drinking in the previous 30 days. Nebraska also ranks first in the nation for the percentage of youth riding with a drinking driver and for driving after drinking alcohol. Furthermore, more than one-fourth of Nebraska youth reported having their first drink of alcohol prior to age 13, and 53% of Nebraska youth surveyed reported current alcohol use (6th in the nation).

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