SAVE LIVES AND REDUCE THE DEFICIT:
RAISE ALCOHOLIC-BEVERAGE TAXES, DON’T LOWER THEM

Dear Representative:

As a coalition of organizations concerned with public health, fiscal responsibility, and the well being of young people and families, we strongly oppose any reduction in federal excise taxes on alcoholic beverages. We urge you to reject alcoholic-beverage industry appeals to include such cuts in any new tax proposals under consideration in the 109th Congress. Please refrain from co-sponsoring any legislation that would reduce alcohol taxes. We urge you to instead consider a long-overdue increase in historically low excise taxes on alcoholic beverages. Such an increase could contribute to deficit reduction goals and help to pay for the prevention and treatment of alcohol-related problems.

Reducing federal excise taxes on beer, liquor, and wine is bad fiscal and public health policy, that would only add to budget deficits and threaten the health and safety of Americans:

- A 2003 National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine review of the research evidence has affirmed that cheaper alcohol would contribute to increased underage drinking.

- Federal excise taxes on alcoholic beverages lag far behind inflation, having increased only once in 54 years for beer and wine and only twice for liquor. Current federal and state taxes on alcoholic beverages don’t come close to offsetting the staggering public health and safety costs of alcohol consumption – estimated at $53 billion per year for the costs associated with underage drinking alone. If anything, beer and liquor taxes should be raised to help meet prevention, treatment, law enforcement, and other costs associated with excessive and underage drinking.

- By wide margins, the American public supports increases – not decreases – in alcohol taxes. That’s because about one-third of adults don’t drink at all and among those who do, most drink so little that they would barely notice a tax decrease (or increase). Alcohol tax cuts would benefit only producers and the 20% of heavy and addicted drinkers who consume 85% of the alcohol.

Please reject industry appeals to lower federal excise taxes on alcoholic beverages and consider ways to increase them instead.

Sincerely,

Stacia Murphy, President
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence

George A. Hacker, Director
Alcohol Policies Project
Center for Science in the Public Interest

On behalf of (see reverse):
SAVE LIVES AND REDUCE THE DEFICIT:
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Endorsing Organizations:

American College Health Association
American College of Preventative Medicine
American Public Health Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
Christian Action League of North Carolina, Inc.
Consumer Federation of America
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse
National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery (NAAAPI)
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco
National Peer Helpers Association
Partnership for Recovery
Samaritan Village
Security on Campus, Inc.
Society for Adolescent Medicine
Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
State Associations of Addiction Services (SAAS)
Therapeutic Communities of America