

Coalition for the Prevention of Alcohol Problems

1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20009-5728

March 16, 2005

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

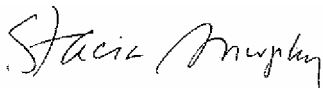
Dear Representative:

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.



Stacia Murphy, President
National Council on
Alcoholism and Drug Dependence

Sincerely,



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

On behalf of (see reverse):

Co-Chairs: *George Hacker, Center for Science in the Public Interest, (202) 332-9110, ext. 343*

Stacia Murphy, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, (202) 737-8122

Steering Committee: *Susan Hildebrandt, American Academy of Family Physicians, (202) 232-9033 •*

Elaine Holland Vining, American Academy of Pediatrics, (202) 347-8600 † Brian Williams, American Public Health Association, (202) 789-5648 •

Chris Waldrop, Consumer Federation of America, (202) 387-6121 † Katherine Grincewich, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, (202) 541-3300 • Cynthia Abrams, United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society, (202) 488-5600 • Barrett Duke, Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, (202) 547-8105

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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