

**George A. Hacker, Director, Alcohol Policies Project,  
Center for Science in the Public Interest,  
on the Beer Industry's Opposition to Effective Programs to Prevent Underage Drinking**

At the end of June, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Institute of Medicine expects to release its report to Congress on Developing a Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Underage Drinking. Even before its release, the National Beer Wholesalers Association (NBWA) has assailed the report as a misuse of taxpayer dollars and has begun lobbying Congress to undermine its importance.

“We’re not surprised by the NBWA’s political attacks. What else would one expect from a group that may stand to lose some of its franchise on underage drinkers, who consume, according to some studies, as much 20% of all the alcohol downed in the United States, most of that in the form of beer? We’re appalled that the NBWA would be so quick to deep-six a high-level scientific inquiry into real solutions to an enormous problem.

The NAS report will provide the first-ever attempt to formulate a cohesive, coherent, science-based national strategy to prevent underage drinking, the nation's number one youth drug problem.

We call on the NBWA and others in the alcoholic-beverage industry to embrace public efforts to educate young people and parents about alcohol, including an independent national media campaign on underage drinking. Such a campaign would not be anti-alcohol. It would not be about stigmatizing drinkers or alcohol producers. It would not, we would hope, be about communicating simplistic and self-defeating messages that heighten youth rebellion and interest in alcohol.

It would, however, be about ending our national denial of underage drinking as a major public health and safety issue, increasing public awareness and understanding of the destructive role of alcohol in young people's lives. It would help strengthen community resolve and capacity to reduce and prevent underage drinking and its myriad harms.”

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*The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is a nonprofit health-advocacy group based in Washington, D.C., that focuses on nutrition, food safety, and alcohol policies. It led efforts to obtain warning labels on alcoholic beverages and is well-known for revealing the nutrition content of many restaurant foods. CSPI is supported largely by the 800,000 U.S. and Canadian subscribers to its Nutrition Action Healthletter and by foundation grants.*

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