

June 22, 2005

Mr. Jeff Becker
President
The Beer Institute
122 C Street, NW, Suite 750
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Becker:

While watching the NBA Championship game last night on ABC, I was quite surprised to see an advertisement for Coors Light beer that (much like a previous, withdrawn ad series for Bud Light) blatantly violates the Beer Institute's Advertising and Marketing Code. Such repetition of the same violation provides little confidence in the effectiveness of beer-industry self-regulation and calls into question brewers' willingness even to abide by their industry's own modest advertising standards.

The subject ad pictures a crowded, lively bar scene, in which an exceptionally industrious worker – a bus boy – rapidly clears Coors Light bottles off tables, grabbing every Coors Light bottle in sight. A co-worker (a waitress) remarks to the manager (or owner) about how hard the new bus boy is working. He responds, saying that he hadn't hired a new bus boy. As he says this, the "bus boy" is seen sneaking out of the bar, with an overflowing tub of Coors Light bottles.

Section 2.d. of the Beer Institute's Advertising and Marketing Code states: "Beer advertising and marketing materials should not portray or imply illegal activity of any kind." The ad patently portrays a young man stealing beer from customers in the bar and running off with an excessive quantity of it. It violates not only Section 2.d., but also the general "responsibility" premises contained in the code. One wonders why brewers persist in suggesting (to its large television audience of young – including underage – men) that anything goes in order to get a beer; even stealing.

I am well aware that the Beer Institute has no formal process for reviewing complaints about its members' advertising, although we're hoping that will change in response to the Federal Trade Commission's interest in that issue. Given the regularity with which members ignore the Beer Institute's advertising code, we strongly urge you to be more vigilant and effective in curbing inappropriate advertising practices. Please take systematic action to put an end to advertising such as that described above.

Sincerely,

George A. Hacker
Director
Alcohol Policies Project

cc. Bart Alexander, Adolph Coors Company (MolsonCoors)
Janet Evans, Federal Trade Commission

