



WASHINGTON UPDATE

March 2006

Comments on State Drunk Driving Programs – On February 2, BI filed comments on a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) regarding criteria for states to qualify for alcohol-impaired driving prevention programs incentive grants contained in the transportation funding bill passed last year by Congress. Our brief comments affirmed Congress’ decision to continue a grant program to combat drunk driving and our belief that states are the level of government best positioned to determine the appropriate approaches to reducing drunk driving within their own jurisdictions. We expressed concern that NHTSA had, with respect to a number of the criteria, added factors or standards that states must meet that did not appear in the statute. We felt that the additional requirements could make it unduly difficult for states, especially small, rural ones, to become eligible for the grant program. Our comments concluded by stating our belief that it is in the national interest to have as many states as possible participate in the program as it would broaden the fight against drunk driving and therefore increase safety. NHTSA has not yet issued the final rulemaking.

ICCPUD Report and Town Hall Meetings – The long-awaited final plan from the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD) was released to Congress on February 9. Perhaps the biggest departure from past reports is the identification of targets for measuring the success of the federal plan. The targets consist of three specific goals for 2009:

- “Reduce the prevalence of past month use by those ages 12 through 20 by 10% as measured against the 2004 baseline of 28.7 percent;”
- “Reduce the prevalence of those aged 12 through 20 reporting binge alcohol use in the past 30 days by 10% as measured against the 2004 baseline of 19.6 percent;” and
- “Achieve an increase of average age of first use among those who initiate before age 21 to 16.5 years of age as compared to the 2004 baseline.”

A positive from the plan is the inclusion of the alcohol beverage industry in the list of those who should be involved in the fight against illegal underage drinking. As part of its activities, ICCPUD is encouraging states and localities to hold Town Hall Meetings on the topic of underage drinking prevention on or near March 28 to increase understanding and awareness of underage drinking and its consequences and to encourage individuals, families, and communities to address the problem. To date, over a thousand such meetings are scheduled. Click on this link to find out when and where the Town Hall Meeting in your community will take place:

<http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhall/flashmap/locations.aspx>.

The organizations listed on the site are those that have committed to hold a Town Hall Meeting. Where dates are listed, a meeting has been confirmed. A lack of a date on the site does not necessarily mean that a meeting has not yet been scheduled. BI encourages you to attend the Town Hall Meetings in your area. Since these will be community-based, having a concerned community member who is also part of the beer industry may serve to highlight our commitment to reducing illegal underage drinking and our desire to work with others who share that goal.

TTB User Fees – On March 9, BI co-signed a joint industry letter with the Wine Institute and other associations expressing strong opposition to a proposal to authorize the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) to impose user fees for applications and other legally-imposed obligations from companies that produce, import, and sell alcohol beverages. This proposal would authorize TTB to collect fees for: applications for authorization to produce, import, or sell at wholesale, alcohol beverages; applications for Certificates of Label Approval; applications for Formula Approval from the TTB laboratories; petitions for American Viticultural Areas; and other similar applications or requests. A similar proposal was defeated last year. The other signatories to the letter were Brewers Association, Distilled Spirits Council, Flavor and Extract Manufacturers Association, National Association of Beverage Importers, National Beer Wholesalers Association, Wine America, and Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America.

Surgeon General's Call to Action on Preventing Underage Drinking – On March 15, BI filed comments on the Surgeon General's upcoming Call to Action. Our comments stressed that much progress has been made in the fight against illegal underage drinking, thanks in part to brewers' programs tackling the issue. We urged the Surgeon General to review existing programs in this area and to emphasize collaboration with all those involved in fighting underage drinking, including brewers, distributors, retailers, all levels of government, law enforcement, advocates, and concerned citizens, when formulating his plan. The Call to Action is slated to be released in April.

For copies of the documents described in this Washington Report or talking points to aid you at Town Hall Meetings, please contact BI staffer Liz Tobin.