

# Public Health and Alcohol Policy

**Dispelling Myths, Forging Solutions**

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# Public Health and Alcohol Policy

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## Takeaway Messages:

- 1) **We are not crazy, or even the enemy**
- 2) **What we want is reasonable, based in science, and benefits everyone**
- 3) **We will go away once the problems do**

# Top 5 Myths about Public Health

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## 1. Neo-Prohibitionists



# Top 5 Myths about Public Health

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## 2. California Hippies



# Top 5 Myths about Public Health

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## 3. Kill-joys, buzz-killers



# Top 5 Myths about Public Health

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## 4. Nanny State



# Top 5 Myths about Public Health

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## 4. Anti-Business



# Realities About Public Health

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“Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions for people to be healthy.”

-- Institute of Medicine, The Future of Public Health, 1988

**PREVENTION is the core pillar of public health**



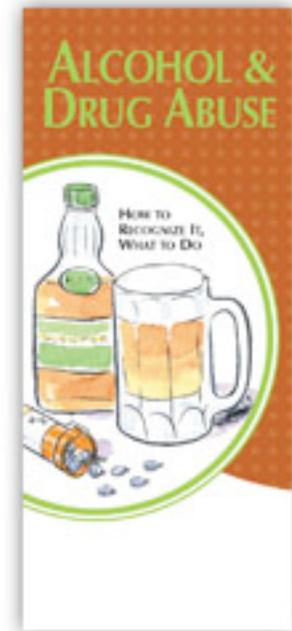
# Realities About Public Health

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Education alone has proven to be a dismal failure

**“There is not a single public health crisis in the history of mankind that has been solved by handing out brochures.”**

– Harold Goldstein, director,  
California Center for Public Health Advocacy



# Realities About Public Health

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## Parents Cannot be Expected to Shoulder the Burden Alone

### Other ways we help parents:

- Speed limits, speed bumps
- Child pornography laws
- Child labor laws
- Toy safety laws
- Food safety laws

"My daughter's high school graduation is a special occasion, so I think it's okay if I allow her and her friends to drink alcohol."

**THINK AGAIN.**

Parents have the power to help prevent underage drinking. Regardless of whether you're buying teens alcohol or hosting a drinking party for minors, it's irresponsible and illegal. Do your part to prevent. Don't provide alcohol to minors.

**Brewery don't provide**  
ANHEUSER-BUSCH, INC.

A partnership with  
National Responsible Beverage Association

RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS™

# Forging Solutions

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**Scientifically-proven factors to reduce both underage drinking and adult over-consumption:**

- 1) Price – youth especially sensitive**
- 2) Access – over-concentration of retail outlets**
- 3) Marketing – alcohol is essential to fun, success, etc.**

# Institute of Medicine Recommendation

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- “Congress and state legislatures should raise excise taxes to reduce underage consumption and to raise additional revenues for this purpose.”
- “Top priority should be given to raising beer taxes, and excise tax rates for all alcoholic beverages should be indexed to the consumer price index so that they keep pace with inflation without the necessity of further legislative action.”

Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility, NAS, 2003

# Impact of Higher Taxes

## UNDERAGE DRINKING

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**Taxes are particularly effective at reducing underage drinking. For example, a 50% increase in price from a tax change would reduce:**

- **Underage drinking by 32.5%**
- **The number of heavy (more than 9 drinking occasions in last month) underage drinkers by 21%**
- **The number of youth traffic fatalities by 15.5%**

# Impact of Higher Prices

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- **A 10% increase in price would reduce traffic crashes by 5 - 10%, with even larger reductions (7 - 17%) for youth**
- **A 10% increase in price would reduce cirrhosis mortality from 8 - 13%**
- **Higher prices can reduce rates of homicide, suicide, domestic violence, and child abuse**

# Case Study in Lowering Taxes FINLAND

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In 2004, the **government** in Finland **cut taxes** on:

**spirits** by 44%, **wine** by 10% and **beer** by 32%

**RESULTS** (one year later):

- Alcohol became the **number one killer** in Finland, surpassing heart disease for the first time in the nation's **history**
- Liver cirrhosis **deaths increased 30%**
- Alcohol related **deaths increased by 20%**, 7 additional **deaths** a week

Soaring consumption and alcohol problems have continued;

**2008, the government increased spirits tax by 15%,  
beer and wine tax by 10%**

# What About Joe & Jane Six-pack?

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- 1) Beer is not essential, like food (sorry)
- 2) Moderate drinkers hardly impacted
- 3) Most impacted are youth, heavy drinkers
- 4) Prices are going up anyway

While food prices fall in the midst of a recession, beer prices are going up...

# What About Joe & Jane Six-pack?

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**“Big Beer looks as if it's testing President Obama's tolerance. Both Anheuser-Busch InBev and MillerCoors are raising prices at the same time, during a recession, and while beer demand is slumping. With an 80 percent market share between them, it almost begs for an antitrust review of the industry.”**

*Source: Higher Beer Prices Raise Red Flag With Big Beer Companies Holding So Much Pricing Power, Is It Time for a Govt. Antitrust Review? ABC News / The Big Money, September 2, 2009*



# What About Joe & Jane Six-pack?

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“[Joe and Jane] face well known challenges in today’s economic climate.”

“Lowering the beer tax would mean more money in the pockets of these young, hard-working men and women.”

Source: Roll Back The Beer Tax, Beer Institute



# What About Job Losses?

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- 1) There is not one published, peer-reviewed study on job impacts; this is needed
- 2) Industry methodology not transparent
- 3) Extremely challenging to show cause/effect
- 4) Research shows industry passes on more than 100% of increase to consumer
- 5) Can be used as an excuse / scare tactic  
(ABI threat to close breweries)

# Forging Solutions

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- 1) Price – youth especially sensitive**
- 2) Access – over-concentration of retail outlets**
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# Forging Solutions

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## WHAT INDUSTRY CAN DO TO HELP

- 1) Educate yourselves about science, not rhetoric
- 2) Stop marginalizing public health, talk to us instead
- 3) Stop lobbying against critical public health policies
- 4) Go beyond educational programs in your community
- 5) Reach out to local & state advocates, common ground?

# What We Want – Ultimate Goal

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To put ourselves out of business, not you



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