



LEGISLATIVE NEWS



STOP: CONGRESSIONAL UNDERAGE DRINKING LAW

The **S**ober **T**ruth on **P**reventing (**STOP**) Underage Drinking Act was approved by both the U.S. Senate and the House the week of December 8, 2006, and was signed by President Bush on December 20.

This is the first bill Congress has ever passed that addresses underage drinking, according to David Jernigan, executive director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY). He goes on to say, "HHS has never been required to keep an eye on the issue to this extent. The annual report will be a great tool and will keep (underage drinking) from falling off the agenda."

Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-California) and Rep. Tom Osborne (R-Nebraska) sponsored the measure in the House. Tom Nesbitt, former head of the Nebraska State Patrol worked with Osborne on this endeavor. Nesbitt was a recent speaker at the SCIP Team Leader Meetings in Lincoln.

The STOP Act was notable not only for the bipartisan backing it received in Congress, but also for its broad range of outside supporters. The alcohol industry, which opposed the STOP Act for years, finally came to the table after being approached by Osborne.

George Hacker, director of the alcohol policies project at the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), says, "Passage of the STOP Act represents a long-overdue acknowledgment of the need to do more as a nation to address the harm caused by underage drinking. Unlike illicit drugs, there has been no credible national plan to combat alcohol problems, by far the greater health and safety drag on our nation. That is a huge gap that must be filled, and the STOP Act is a step in the right direction."

Major provisions of the STOP Act include:

- A \$1-million annual national media campaign on underage drinking
- \$5 million in grants to help community coalitions address underage drinking
- \$5 million in grant funding to prevent alcohol abuse at institutions of higher education
- Requiring the Department of Health and Human Service (HHS) to produce an annual report on state underage-drinking prevention and enforcement activities
- Establishing a federal interagency coordination committee on underage drinking
- Authorizing \$6 million for research on underage drinking

(Source: www.jointogether.org; 12-08-06)



On the Local Front

The Nebraska State Unicameral is also taking a look at some new bills regarding underage drinking. Support for the bills comes from Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady and Diane Riibe, Executive Director of Project Extra Mile.

Sen. Lowen Kruse has introduced several bills. The first, LB261 would ban all drinking by minors, including at home with their parents and communion wine at church. Minors try to wiggle out of tickets by telling police they were drinking at home and not in public. "There is no recourse. No way to investigate at home," according to Kruse. The exemption allowing children to drink in their homes was put into law before "we knew that steady alcohol use by teens causes permanent brain damage. We really can't condone a parent getting their kid drunk at home," he said. Kruse has since decided to offer an amendment to this bill to assure teens can drink wine at communion or up to 2 ounces of alcohol as part of a religious ceremony.

Another Kruse bill, LB337 would tighten the keg law, aimed at identifying who bought a keg used at a teen party. A law that already requires kegs to carry purchaser ID stickers has become a joke because the stickers are just ripped off. But Kruse's keg bill would make having a keg without the sticker a misdemeanor.

Another effort from Kruse would allow bartenders and others who serve alcohol to confiscate driver's licenses and turn them over to police if they have reason to believe people under 21 are trying to buy alcohol.

Sen. Steve Lathrop brought a bill, LB258 that would impound the driver's licenses of minors in possession of alcohol. Minors convicted three times couldn't drive until they turned age 21.

(Source: Lincoln Journal Star; January 2007)

THE “BUZZ” ABOUT TOWN

COLD MEDICINE USE RISING

Use of over-the-counter cough and cold medicines has become one of the fastest-growing drug abuse problems for youth.

The abuse of the ingredient dextromethorphan (DXM) is most common among 15 and 16 year olds. Growth in DXM abuse is driven by the 9 to 17 age group. Use of DXM is more popular among 12 and 13 year olds than among 18 year olds.



Dextromethorphan is found in products such as Coricidin HBP Cough and Cold and the cough medicine Robitussin. “Robotripping” is the slang term used to describe use of DXM to obtain a cheap high with the latter product. Robitussin Cough Gels contain even more of the DXM than the cough syrup does (15 mg compared to 10 mg).

Large quantities of DXM can lead to elevated blood pressure and heartbeat, with some users becoming agitated and others lethargic. Possible life-threatening side effects include seizures and elevated body temperature.



(Source: The Los Angeles Times; 12-5-06)

PRESCRIPTION PAINKILLER MISUSE

There are now more new recreational users of prescription painkillers than new pot smokers, according to federal researchers.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reported on a new study that found that misuse of prescription drugs has become the second biggest illicit drug problem, behind marijuana use. Marijuana has long been the most popular illicit drug in the U.S.

Drugs like hydrocodone, including Vicodin, were especially popular, as were oxycodone-based drugs like OxyContin and Percocet.

In the study, 2.7 million people ages 12 and older first misuse prescription drugs each year, compared to an estimated 2.1 million new users of marijuana. Non-medical use of prescription drugs was highest among 18-25 year olds, followed by 12-17 year olds.

An administrator at SAMHSA says, “While marijuana continues to be the most commonly used illicit drug, the misuse of prescription drugs is clearly a growing national concern that requires action from multiple segments of our society. We know that 70% to 80% of those 12 years or older said they got their drugs from a friend or relative and very likely, those came from the family medicine cabinet. Only 4.3% got the pain relievers from a drug dealer or other stranger, and only 0.8% reported buying the drug on the Internet. Parents and other caregivers should store their prescription drugs carefully and dispose of any unused drugs before they can fall into the wrong hands.”

(Source: www.jointogether.org; 10-30-06)



AMBIEN ABUSE



Another prescription medication being misused by teens is the sleep medication, Ambien. Teens report that it causes hallucinations and blackouts. It is known by names such as, “A-minus,” and “Zombie pills” and use seems to be increasing. Users can use Ambien recreationally by resisting the urge to sleep, directly contrary to prescription labels for the drug.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) states that adolescent misuse of sedatives has nearly doubled in recent years. Experts say misusing drugs like Ambien could be dangerous or even fatal if combined with alcohol. Date rape is another concern for young Ambien users who may black out after taking the drug.

(Source: www.jointogether.org; 12-18-06)