



MICAP RECAP

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*Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems
Celebrating its 111th Anniversary in 2016*

RAISING TAXES ON BEER IS A GOOD THING

**By Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, Retired
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MICAP needs your help to get our State Legislature to raise the tax five cents (\$0.05) on a bottle/can/glass (b/c/g) of beer. Representative Thomas Hooker of Byron Center has introduced legislation into the Michigan House in House Bill 5873. The following paragraphs explain the need for that bill, what is included in the bill and how you can help. I hope you'll keep reading.

Nearly all the literature on beverage alcohol (b/a) indicates that even a few pennies raise in cost for a drink of beverage alcohol reduces consumption/damage/harm. This is true for abusive and/or moderate drinkers. It is especially true for under-aged drinkers and binge drinkers. Because most under-aged drinkers have a more limited amount of discretionary income to spend, any raise in price translates into more difficulty for under-aged persons to purchase.

There is even more incentive to raise the tax \$0.05 on a b/c/g of beer. Under the present tax rate of 1.9 cents per b/c/g, or \$6.30 per 31-gallon barrel, the annual revenue approximates \$39.5 million per year, of which less than \$20 million goes toward prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and highway safety efforts. Under Representative Hooker's House Bill 5873, ALL funds are dedicated to prevention, treatment rehabilitation and highway safety efforts.

House Bill 5873 would also tie the tax rate to inflation. This is important because the 1966 rate (\$6.30 per barrel, or 1.9 cents per b/c/g) has lost 86% of its value because of inflation. Had that rate been tied to inflation, it would now be worth about \$44.00 per barrel or 13 cents per b/c/g. Instead of about \$39.4 million dollars per year, the revenue would be in the neighborhood of \$272 Million (according to the Alcohol Justice Tax Calculator) annually.

House Bill 5873 also provides for an OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE as well as how the INFLATION RATE is calculated and how taxes will be assessed.

In short, this is the Right Bill at the Right Time in the Right Place to help reduce addiction, harm, illness, job disruption and personal and

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family problems because of the use and abuse of beverage alcohol. I hope you will help us get this legislation adopted.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Write a letter to one or more of the following persons:

The sponsor of the bill, Representative Thomas Hooker, P. O. Box 30014, Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514 commending him for introducing H.B. 5873 and urging him to push it along.

The chairperson of the Regulatory Reform Committee, to which H.B. 5873 has been assigned. Rep. Ray Franz is the chairperson. His address is the same as that of Rep. Hooker above.

Your own representative, whose postal address is the same as the other two representatives listed above.

Note: Hand-written and typed letters sent via the U.S. Post Office carry the most weight and are preferred.

If you are unable to write and mail a letter, an e-mail is the second best way of contacting the persons listed above. Their e-mail addresses are:

rayfranz@house.mi.gov
thomashooker@house.mi.gov

Please send it to P.O. Box 10212, Lansing, Michigan 48901-0212 or e-mail it to info@micap.com. 

You may feel free to copy this "WHITE PAPER" and distribute it to friends and colleagues who would join us in supporting this legislation to make a better Public Policy for Beverage Alcohol in Michigan.

Your financial support will be crucial to MICAP as we nurture this campaign to make it happen.

Finally, I would have you note that several beverage alcohol and hospitality groups have already come out against this bill. We need your support.

COURAGEOUS PERSUADERS COMPETITION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM NOW OPEN

Now in its 17th year, Courageous Persuaders is a national competition that invites high school students to create 30-second television commercials warning middle school students about the dangers of underage drinking, drinking and driving and texting while driving. In 2016, the contest drew 652 entries from 242 high schools, and has involved over 1,000 students from 43 states across the U.S. and Canada.

"The awareness raised through the creativity of the students participating in Courageous Persuaders has the power to save lives," said Rod Alberts, DADA Executive Director.

Spearheaded by the Detroit Auto Dealers Association (DADA) Education Foundation, Courageous Persuaders offers over \$26,000 in scholarship awards to high school students. The entry deadline for submission is February 9, 2017. The grand prize winning entry is aired on network stations and will be streaming on *CourageousPer-*

suaders.com. The Michigan Department of State, led by Secretary of State Ruth Johnson, will also show the winning commercials in select Michigan Secretary of State (SOS) branch offices.

The commercials should be targeted toward middle school-aged children. Courageous Persuaders is a peer-to-peer program and questionnaires will be administered to middle school classrooms to gauge the persuasiveness of the commercials. Ratings on these questionnaires determine the scholarship winners.

All winners will be announced at the Courageous Persuaders Awards Celebration in May 2017. To review the official video contest rules and enter the 2017 Courageous Persuaders competition, visit *CourageousPersuaders.com*. For additional questions, please contact Sandy Herp, 248.283.5138 or sherp@dada.org.

RETHINKING DRINKING^(SM): ALCOHOL AND YOUR HEALTH

By Vernon K. Smith, Vice President, MICAP

Some statistics about alcohol use are surprising. For example, it sometimes seems like everyone else regularly drinks, perhaps a glass or two of wine or beer, or maybe more on certain occasions. Many people find it surprising that such a large percentage – 35% – of American adults never drink alcohol. Never.

About the same number of adults – 37% – drink at levels generally considered “low-risk.” In this group are men who consume up to 4 drinks a day, or up to 14 drinks per week; or women who consume up to 3 drinks a day, or up to 7 drinks per week.

Obviously, “low-risk” doesn’t mean “no-risk.” Persons whose drinking is within the low-risk thresholds sometimes experience serious problems when they consume these drinks in a short time, or if they drive, if they have other health problems, if they are taking certain prescription drugs or if they are pregnant or trying to become pregnant. And, drinking at this level sometimes leads to heavier, high-risk drinking.

Over one-fourth of American adults – 28% – drink at high-risk levels. This is where the big problems with alcohol become evident. These individuals consume alcohol exceeding the thresholds for low risk, and in so doing place themselves at high risk for multiple alcohol-related problems. Often, these persons feel they can “hold their liquor,” meaning that they can drink heavily without feeling a buzz. Unfortunately, this tolerance for alcohol increases their risk of alcoholism and the higher levels of alcohol they consume can cause heart, liver and brain damage that goes unnoticed until it is too late.

The harm of at-risk drinking is substantial. Data from the National Institutes of Health cites these effects, all of which affect both the individual and their families, co-workers and communities:

“Injuries. Drinking too much increases your chances of being injured or even killed. Alcohol is a factor, for example, in about 60% of fatal burn injuries, drownings and homicides; 50% of severe trauma injuries and sexual assaults; and 40% of fatal motor vehicle crashes, suicides, and fatal falls.

Health problems. Heavy drinkers have a greater risk of liver disease, heart disease, sleep disorders, depression, stroke, bleeding from the stomach,

sexually transmitted infections from unsafe sex and several types of cancer. They may also have problems managing diabetes, high blood pressure and other conditions.

Birth defects. Drinking during pregnancy can cause brain damage and other serious problems in the baby. Because it is not yet known whether any amount of alcohol is safe for a developing baby, women who are pregnant or may become pregnant should not drink.

Alcohol use disorders. Generally known as alcoholism and alcohol abuse, alcohol use disorders are medical conditions that doctors can diagnose when a patient’s drinking causes distress or harm. In the United States, about 18 million people have an alcohol use disorder.”

Sadly, the serious effects of alcohol use are not limited to the person who is drinking, but can affect all those around them, including family members who they love. As one example, an estimated 10 percent of children live in a home with a parent who has an alcohol problem. These children have a greater risk of being abused or neglected and of developing their own alcohol or drug problems, or experiencing depression, anxiety and behavioral problems.

For those whose drinking falls into the categories of high risk or problem drinking, or who are experiencing alcohol use disorder, many resources are available to help. Experience has shown that once a person is dependent on alcohol, change is never easy. Many find that they can get help by contacting their doctor, health plan or health insurer, local health department or an employee assistance plan.

Another resource is a booklet “Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much,” available online at www.niaa.nih.gov/guide or by calling 301-443-3860.

This article summarizes information and excerpts directly from “Rethinking Drinking: Alcohol and Your Health,” newly updated in May 2016 by the National Institutes for Health. This 16-page booklet includes the latest research-based information about alcohol use, problems that can occur from alcohol use and overuse and tools for those thinking about change in their alcohol use. The booklet is available free online at: rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov



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Please Consider a Year End Donation to MICAP

MICAP is a small non-profit organization with a mission to provide information about the consequences of alcohol abuse, and to promote public policies that address these issues. It is a big task, and we are committed to doing our part.

For this work, MICAP depends 100% on gifts from people like you. A large share of gifts and bequests are made near the end of the calendar year, in November and December. Our work year-around depends directly on these gifts. MICAP could not do its work without your financial support, which truly makes a difference in this important work.

MICAP is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Your gift to MICAP is tax deductible to the extent allowed by the tax code. Please use the enclosed envelope, or send your check to: MICAP, P.O. Box 10212, Lansing, MI 48901.

From the bottom of our heart, we thank you!