

July 15, 2009

Charles B. Rangel, Chairman  
Ways and Means Committee  
US House of Representatives  
Room 1102 LHOB  
Washington, DC 20515

George Miller, Chairman  
Education and Labor Committee  
Room 2181 RHOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Henry A. Waxman, Chairman  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
Room 2123 RHOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Health Reform Should Raise Taxes on Alcoholic Beverages

Dear Chairman Rangel, Miller and Waxman:

On behalf of Partnership for Prevention, I urge you to support raising the federal excise tax on alcoholic beverages. Higher alcohol excise taxes are an important tool in reducing the public health toll of alcohol abuse, while also providing a viable and appropriate source of funding to finance reform of our nation's health system.

The Task Force on Community Health Services completed a systematic review of the scientific evidence on public health impact from raising the price of alcoholic beverages. This independent advisory body concluded that increased alcoholic beverage prices or taxes were consistently related to:

- Fewer motor vehicle crashes and deaths (10 of 11 studies)
- Less alcohol-impaired driving (3 of 3 studies)
- Less mortality from liver cirrhosis (5 of 5 studies)
- Less mortality from all causes (1 study)

Benefits from higher alcohol excise taxes were also demonstrated to reduce the incidence of violence (3 studies), sexually transmitted diseases (1 study), and alcohol dependence (1 study).

Federal alcohol excise taxes were last raised in 1991 and have not kept pace with inflation. The Congressional Budget Office indicated that increasing the tax rate 20% on distilled spirits and equalizing the tax rates on other alcoholic beverages would provide \$60 billion in new revenue

over a decade. It is important to note that any tax increase on alcoholic beverages will be paid by a small percentage of the population. Nearly three-quarters of American adults abstain from alcohol or drink once a week or less.

We strongly urge you to include higher alcohol taxes among the measures to finance comprehensive health care reform. Additionally, we urge you to consider earmarking new funds generated by any increase for assuring full funding of the Prevention and Wellness Trust established under Title III, Section 2301 of the "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009."

Sincerely,



Dr. Robert J. Gould  
President

References:

Guide to Community Preventive Services. Preventing excessive alcohol use: increasing alcohol taxes. [www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol/increasingtaxes.html](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol/increasingtaxes.html). Accessed 06/22/2009.

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Drinking in America: Myths, Realities, and Prevention Policy. [http://www.udetc.org/documents/Drinking\\_in\\_America.pdf](http://www.udetc.org/documents/Drinking_in_America.pdf). Accessed 6/22/2009.