



CRAFT
BREWING
BUSINESS

Professional Insight, Unfiltered

Alcohol Justice says Anheuser-Busch's White House-approved free-beer-for-a-vaccination campaign is a data collection scheme

June 8, 2021 [Keith Gribbins](#)

We retweeted this comment the other day from craft beer ambassador Julia Herz.



We've actually seen similar campaigns from craft breweries. Cleveland's Market Garden Brewery and its [Beer and the Shot](#) campaign come to mind, which made headlines back in March. Share your name, email and your vaccination card and Market Garden will set you up with a beer for 10 cents. Just click [right here](#).

Another [interesting take](#) came from Colorado's WeldWerks Brewing Co. It partnered with the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment to host a walk-in vaccination clinic

on Saturday, May 22, at WeldWerks. Those that received the vaccine were rewarded with one free draft pour, as well as a limited edition “I Got Vaccinated” 16-oz can of beer to take home. Sweet deal.

Never to be left out, Anheuser-Busch InBev has fronted a lot of initiatives addressing the pandemic (from producing [hand sanitizer](#) to big donations to the likes of [American Red Cross](#)). Its recent “Let’s Grab a Beer” marketing campaign also centers around the pandemic. Here’s the latest facet: Last Wednesday, President Joe Biden announced a National Month of Action to “mobilize an all-of-America sprint to get of [[sic](#)] as many U.S. adults as possible at least one shot by July 4th...” A bunch of companies are involved in this (from Door Dash to United Airlines), promoting the effort with vaccine incentives, including A-B. From the [White House](#):

“Anheuser-Busch will give away free beer to all adults over the age of 21 in America on July 4th to celebrate the country’s progress against COVID.”

All adults over 21? That does not seem right, but OK, White House. This appears to be an expansion of A-B’s previously announced A Beer on Bud campaign. Here’s the gist: When America reaches the White House’s goal of 70 percent of adults partially vaccinated, A-B will give away a beer, seltzer, non-alcoholic beverage or some other A-B product to vaccinated adults 21+ who participate. Right now, according to the [White House](#), 63 percent of adult Americans have received at least one shot, and 52 percent of adult Americans are fully vaccinated. To participate, according to the A-B [press release](#)...

“Adults 21+ will simply upload a picture of themselves in their favorite place to grab a beer, whether with friends at their favorite local bar and restaurant or with family in their very own backyard, at [MyCooler.com/Beer](#) to enter to receive a beer on A-B.”

This seems fishy to Alcohol Justice, an organization that “[fights](#) to protect the public from the impact of the alcohol industry’s negative practices by monitoring and exposing their harmful actions.” Alcohol Justice released its own [press release](#), noting the free beer giveaway is just a marketing campaign to gather consumer data. Here’s its hot take:

“Not only does this giveaway provide free advertising for ABI, it gives them an unparalleled opportunity to harvest Americans’ personal information. To claim the free ABI product, consumers must not only provide name and date of birth, but also a photo — which has encoded information about their location and even the settings on their smartphone. This is not so Budweiser can verify vaccine status (it is illegal for them to do so), it’s so they can continue to laser-target marketing and, in the end, sell more beer.”

“AB-InBev has spent the last 15 months capitalizing on the pandemic to advance its strategy to deregulate alcohol and increase sales. This is yet another example of putting corporate benefit over public health and safety,” said Nicole Holt, Chair, U.S. Alcohol Policy Alliance.”

“Let’s Grab A Beer” is a marketing and data collecting scheme, not a heroic act by ABI. In fact, their cost is no more than any seasonal advertising campaign. According to Alcohol Justice estimates, the over-the-counter price of a bottle of Budweiser for every

unvaccinated American would be \$144 million. That is less than 10% of their estimated domestic marketing budget of \$1.5 billion.”

A-B aired its first-ever [corporate](#) Super Bowl spot called “Let’s Grab a Beer” during Super Bowl LV, with Oscar-nominated filmmaker David Fincher as executive producer and Atticus Ross creating the score. The [theme](#)?

“When we say “Let’s grab a beer”, it’s never just about the beer. It’s always about life’s most meaningful moments — big and small — that happen when we come together over a beer.”

A-B made a [big deal](#) that it would not have a Budweiser ad in the last Super Bowl because it was helping promote COVID-19 awareness and safety instead. Of course, it still spent lots of cash for four minutes on other brands during Super Bowl LV, including that David Fincher-approved “Let’s Grab a Beer” spot, but the money from A-B’s pulled Budweiser spot ([reportedly](#) some \$5 million+) was to be directed to COVID-19 vaccine awareness with donations, partnerships and ad campaigns. As A-B noted in its recent [press release](#), the focus of “Let’s Grab a Beer” continues to be the safety of its customers.

“For us, everything begins and ends with people, and consumers are at the center of everything we do,” said Marcel Marcondes, CMO, Anheuser-Busch. “Since last March, we’ve been focused on pivoting all our plans in order to ensure that our brands remained relevant and meaningful, through tangible actions. And now that we are at this pivotal moment where people are excited to be together again, it only makes sense that we would unite our full portfolio and take this action to encourage people to get vaccinated. There’s never been a better time to be able to say, ‘let’s grab a beer.’”

To read more about A-B’s COVID-19 initiatives, [click here](#). To learn more about Alcohol Justice’s take on the whole subject, including alcohol abuse worsening during the pandemic, [click here](#). If you want to just go buy a dang beer, drink it in a hop spa and forget the pandemic ever happened, [click here](#).