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Alcohol Justice Blasts California Legislature for Buckling to Big Alcohol's Demand for Booze Sweepstakes and Contests

Advocates Ask Governor Brown to Veto SB 778 and Renew Call for Increased Alcohol Taxes

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 27, 2012) – In stunning denial of the public health and safety threats of encouraging more alcohol consumption, the California State Legislature has passed a bill to allow the use of sweepstakes and contests to promote alcohol sales in the state.

"We are deeply disturbed by this election year gift to Big Alcohol," stated Alcohol Justice Public Affairs Director Michael Scippa. *"We are calling upon Governor Brown to veto this irresponsible measure because overturning the state's existing ban on alcohol-related contests will lead to increased over-consumption and increased public health and safety costs."*

Proponents of SB 778, led by Wine Institute, the bill's sponsor, and Senator Alex Padilla (D-San Fernando Valley), the bill's author, pleaded that California was at a competitive disadvantage by being one of the only states in the country that did not allow alcohol sweepstakes and contests. This hollow argument ignores the facts that California not only leads the country in alcohol sales at nearly \$22 billion a year, but also leads the country in alcohol-related harm, which was estimated in 2008 to be more than [\\$38 billion a year.](#)

"It is unfortunate that the California Legislature continues to allow greater marketing opportunities for the Alcohol Industry without regard to the damages caused by their products," said Rev. James Butler from the California Council on Alcohol Problems (CalCAP). *"Until alcohol taxes are raised to help meet the tremendous financial and social costs caused by alcohol in our state, there should be a moratorium on all legislation benefiting the alcohol industry. SB 778 deserves the Governor's veto."*

In California the alcohol industry pays virtually nothing to mitigate the harm its products cause. The last time the state's alcohol excise tax was increased was in 1991, when it went up by a penny.

"Within the context of severe state cuts in corrections, health, and social services, and local government bankruptcies, and the uncertainty about adequate resources to support realignment of corrections, mental health, and alcohol and drug programs, we need the alcohol industry to pay their fair share of state and local taxpayer costs for alcohol addiction and abuse," stated Mark Carlson, Director, Lutheran Office of Public Policy – California. *"Until we get that, the state should not be expanding privileges for sellers of products that cause real harm without responding to strong popular support for raising more revenue from alcohol."*

"California residents and visitors don't need more encouragement to buy or consume alcohol," added Scippa. *"Hopefully the Governor will use his authority to veto SB 778. Then he can get to work raising the state's alcohol tax to protect public health and safety, and help reduce the state's massive budget deficit."*

Alcohol Justice is encouraging the public to tell Governor Brown to veto SB 778. To take action, go to <http://action.alcoholjustice.org>

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