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Big Alcohol Tearing Down California's Alcohol Regulations

Alcohol Justice Reports Legislature Succumbs Again to Alcohol Lobby

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (February 6, 2013) – Alcohol Justice released a new report today illustrating the effectiveness of Big Alcohol lobbying on California state government at the end of the 2011-2012 legislative session.

“Our legislature continues to pander to the well-healed interests of Big Alcohol at the public’s expense,” stated Bruce Lee Livingston, Executive Director/CEO of Alcohol Justice. *“What they conveniently failed to see in 2012 is that incremental alcohol deregulation increases alcohol-related harm and cost in the state.”*

Alcohol Justice has estimated that \$9 billion of the state’s \$38.4 billion in annual alcohol-related harm is paid for by taxpayers. The incremental and systematic weakening of regulations that limit access, availability, and exposure to alcoholic beverages undermines public health and safety and drives up the social and government costs. California’s harmful alcohol legislation can be grouped into two general categories: (1) bills that erode the regulatory tiers, and (2) bills that expand access to alcoholic beverages and exposure to advertising and marketing.

Industry-sponsored bills with negative implications for public health and safety passed and signed into law during the California 2011-2012 session were:

AB 573 – Chesbro (D-Mendocino) – Loosens up wine sales by allowing wholesalers to bring poorly selling wine back into the state.

SB 778 – Padilla (D-San Fernando Valley) – Allows alcohol producers and suppliers, with enticements to nonprofits, to conduct prize sweepstakes. Sponsored by the Wine Institute to promote brand awareness, with enticements to non-profits.

SB 1531 – Wolk (D-Vacaville) – Proliferates alcohol licenses by changing how they are counted.

AB 1320 – Allen (D-Napa) – Allows California ABC to increase number of on-sale general licenses.

AB 2184 – Hall (D-Compton) – Allows for an “employee” (AKA celebrity sponsor) to appear at a promotional event at a licensee and sign autographs.

AB 2349 – Nestande (R-Riverside) – Extends the power of Big Alcohol to the retail level, by allowing for producers and wholesalers to advertise certain retailers. This is a removal of tied house restrictions.

The biggest beneficiaries of the passage of these bills are the world’s three biggest alcohol producers – Anheuser-Busch InBev, MillerCoors, and Diageo – all based outside the U.S.

“State by state, one legislative session after the next, Big Alcohol systematically chips away at the regulatory structures,” stated report co-author Sarah Mart, Director of Research at Alcohol Justice. *“While any single policy victory for the industry may appear small in a given year, those victories snowball over time. They ultimately sustain an environment where ever-increasing alcohol sales and industry consolidation are allowed at public expense.”*

To read the complete report, go to AlcoholJustice.org

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