

NEWS RELEASE



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National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence – New Jersey
1675 Whitehorse-Mercerville Road, Suite 205, Hamilton, NJ 08619

CONTACT: Daniel Meara
609.689.0121 x 102
dmeara@ncaddnj.org

NCADD-NJ urges nickel per gallon tax hike on alcohol to ease addiction treatment shortfall

TRENTON ... (May 18, 2005) – The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey issued a call today for the Legislature to approve a five-cent per gallon increase in the excise tax on alcohol and dedicate the revenue to expanding addiction treatment and prevention. An increase in New Jersey’s alcohol tax and earmarking the money for treatment and prevention has the support of more than two-thirds of state residents, according to Bloustein Center for Survey Research polling released today by NCADD – New Jersey.

“Increasing the excise tax by just a nickel a gallon would add \$10 million to addiction treatment in the state, providing 3,800 New Jerseyans with a drug or alcohol addiction an opportunity to access desperately needed care. Several bills were introduced to allocate that amount to treatment expansion in the aftermath of last fall’s needle exchange debate.” John Hulick, NCADD-NJ’s director of Public Affairs and Policy, said.

During last year’s legislative debate on syringe access, the need for treatment emerged as the one area of agreement on an issue that had passionate defenders on both sides. A broad bipartisan push to spend more for addiction treatment came from Assembly Majority Leader Joseph Roberts (D-Camden), Sen. Wayne Bryant (D-Camden), Sen. Thomas Kean, Jr., (R-Essex), Sen. Ron Rice (D-Essex), and Sen. Diane Allen (R-Burlington). Similarly, citizen advocacy groups on both sides of the needle exchange issue spoke with one voice on the need to have more funds allocated for treatment.

New Jersey’s excise tax on alcohol has remained flat since 1992. Likewise, the state’s Alcohol Enforcement Rehabilitation and Education Fund, through which dedicated alcoholic beverage taxes are disbursed to New Jersey’s 21 counties for treatment and other alcohol and drug-related

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issues, has had the same \$11 million in dedicated booze taxes since 1992. This has occurred as revenue from the alcohol tax climbed from \$86,554,015 in 1996 to \$99,167,460 in 2004.

Meanwhile, treatment admissions for addiction have declined over the past decade by nearly 15,000, from 67,188 to 52,241.

The polling commissioned by NCADD-NJ indicates widespread and, over the past four years, consistent support among residents for increasing the excise tax if the “new revenue was used to fund additional programs for alcohol and drug treatment ...” The 2005 numbers are in keeping with what the previous years’ surveys showed, averaging more than 66 percent in favor of the dedicated revenue proposal.

Among the organizations joining NCADD-NJ in calling for increasing the alcohol tax to fund more treatment was Parent-to-Parent, a support group comprising parents with children with an addiction and who in many cases were unable to find appropriate treatment. The Governor’s Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, which advises the governor on addiction issues, was represented, as was Families Against Mandatory Minimums, an advocacy group for sentencing reform and treatment rather than imprisonment for certain non-violent offenders arrested for drug possession.

NCADD-NJ has dedicated itself for more than 20 years to educating New Jersey’s citizens about alcohol and drug use issues, to advocating on state policies concerning individuals addicted to alcohol or other drugs, and to reducing the stigma that frustrates a public health approach to the disease of addiction. More information about the council is available at its website, www.ncaddnj.org.

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