

NEWS RELEASE



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National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey's Eagleton Polling Finds Broad Support for an Alcohol Tax Increase

TRENTON ... (May 24, 2004) – The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey released public opinion polling today that reveals broad public support for increasing the New Jersey's alcohol tax to pay for additional treatment and prevention programs and also demonstrates an understanding by New Jerseyans that youth use of alcohol is a significant problem facing the state.

The public opinion poll, conducted by Eagleton Institute of Politics Center for Public Interest Polling, found that 68 percent of New Jersey residents would support raising the state's alcohol tax if it is tied to more funding for alcohol and drug treatment and prevention programs, while 26 percent of New Jerseyans would oppose an increase for such a dedicated use. Support for raising the alcohol tax with no designated purpose is less widespread (48 percent of New Jersey residents expressing support while 37 percent would oppose an increase with no designated purpose).

“By expressing such broad support for tying any increase in an alcohol tax to additional programs, New Jerseyans clearly do not want to see happen with an increase in the state's alcohol tax what happened with three straight cigarette tax increases,” said, John Hulick director of Public Affairs and Policy with NCADD-NJ, “The cigarette tax increases were used to bolster the general revenue coffers by hundreds of millions of dollars, while at the same time the state's anti-tobacco initiatives saw cuts amounting to \$20 million out of what had been a total allocation of \$30 million.”

New Jersey's currently dedicates of \$11 million in alcohol taxes to the Alcohol Education, Rehabilitation and Enforcement Fund to support prevention, treatment, and drunken driving enforcement programs statewide. This dedication has remained at the \$11 million level since 1991. Hulick stated, “In a state where one in two adults and two in three adolescents who demand addiction treatment can't receive it, and where drunken driving remains a concern, it is incumbent upon the Governor and state Legislature to pursue ways to increase funding for prevention and treatment programs. An increase in the state's

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TAX INCREASE

PAGE TWO

alcohol tax is definitely one way to achieve this goal.”

Another benefit of an increase in the state’s alcohol tax is the price deterrent effect it has on youth use of alcohol, which is a far more common problem among youth than youth use of illicit drugs or tobacco. The poll assessed New Jerseyans’ opinions on youth use of alcohol with nine in ten residents saying alcohol use among teenagers is a serious problem, including 6-in-10 who feel it is very serious.

The survey also asked New Jersey adults about their perceptions of alcohol use among teenagers compared to use of tobacco or other drugs among today’s youth. A plurality of 42 percent of state residents believe that the number of teens who drink alcohol is comparable to the numbers who smoke tobacco. Comparing alcohol to drug use, 33 percent of state residents believe that the number of teens using drugs is about equal to the number who drink alcohol, while 12 percent feel that fewer teens drink than do drugs.

“I’m heartened that New Jerseyans recognized that youth use of alcohol is an important problem facing the state. However, it’s clear that we have to do a better job of educating them about how serious a problem it is. All of our substance use surveys report that youth are using alcohol twice to three times as much as tobacco and marijuana and eight times as much as other illicit drugs” Hulick stated, “The funding of prevention programs through an alcohol tax increase would help produce the same results with youth use of alcohol as we have seen with illicit drugs and tobacco. The state needs to show the same resolve in confronting youth use of alcohol as it has with smoking and illicit drug use.”

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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