

NEWS RELEASE



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National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey releases annual election guide and candidate survey on addiction issues

TRENTON ... (October 20, 2004) - The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey, as it has for the past three years, is releasing an election guide, Decision 2004. In addition to the guide, which focuses on addiction issues such as health insurance reform and expanding drug courts, NCADD-NJ is making available to voters a survey of the state's Congressional candidates' views on the war on drugs, youth alcohol use and sentencing of non-violent offenders. Decision 2004 and the candidate survey can both be accessed at www.ncaddnj.org/publicaffairs/decision2004.htm.

The candidate survey shows agreement among candidates who responded that "alcohol and drug addiction are preventable, treatable chronic diseases." Additionally, all the respondents said they believed that addiction to alcohol or drugs responded to treatment to the same degree as do other established chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes.

"We are pleased to see how well-versed some candidates are on key addiction issues," said the council's director of Public Affairs, John Hulick. "Once the election is over, we hope to see more members of the state's Congressional delegation taking part in the House of Representatives' Addiction, Treatment and Recovery Caucus."

On the issue of youth alcohol use, 75 percent of the survey respondents favored an increase in the excise tax on alcohol to fund education and prevention programs to curtail underage drinking. All thought it a good idea to follow the recommendation of the National Academy of Sciences to create a national anti-alcohol media campaign to discourage youth drinking and to counter industry advertising that appeals to youth.

As for reform of health insurance coverage for addiction, the respondents unanimously favored using federal substance abuse block grant funds for the creation of an ombudsman to assist state consumers of addiction treatment navigate the private health plan appeals process. All respondents also considered it a good practice to require health insurance providers to use a neutral assessment instrument in making treatment placement decisions.

On questions concerning the sentencing of drug offenders, none of the respondents supported mandatory minimums, while three in four were for federal support of drug court programs providing earlier intervention in an offender's 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.

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