

NEWS RELEASE



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NCADD-NJ releases Decision 2005, previewing candidates' views on addiction issues

TRENTON ... (October 3, 2005) - The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey today released its preview of the upcoming General Election, Decision 2005, to inform voters of candidates' positions on addiction issues and to provide other important election-related information. Decision 2005 contains survey results reflecting candidates' positions on youth use of alcohol, access to treatment and treatment vs. incarceration for non-violent drug offenders. The issue of access to treatment is particularly pressing in the wake of findings in the recently released 2003 New Jersey Household Survey on Drug Use and Health showing New Jersey to have the highest rate of heroin use in the country. Both Gubernatorial and many Assembly candidates responded to NCADD-NJ's survey.

The candidate survey shows 88 percent of candidates who responded "favor a public health approach to addiction," and 78 percent 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. Only 34 percent of the responses, however, were in favor of increasing the state's excise tax on alcohol to fund needed treatment.

"We are pleased by the number of candidates who responded and by the general views they expressed," said NCADD-NJ's director of Public Affairs and Policy, John Hulick. "Unfortunately, we do not see these generally enlightened viewpoints on addiction reflected in support of a specific policy that would help alleviate New Jersey's treatment shortfall." The council has proposed a nickel increase in the state's excise tax on alcohol, which would generate an additional \$10 million in alcohol beverage taxes that could translate into treatment for 3,800 residents.

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TREATMENT

PAGE TWO

On the issue of youth alcohol use, 83 percent of the respondents supported dedicating more of the existing revenue from alcohol taxes to education programs designed to address drinking by minors. Not quite half (46 percent) supported a six-month driver's license suspension for youth found to be drinking on public or private property.

On questions concerning the sentencing of drug offenders, 20 percent of respondents supported mandatory minimums for drug offenses. Three in four were for municipal-based drug court programs that would provide earlier intervention in an offender's drug use.

A printed version of Decision 2005 containing vital election-related information and a tabulation of responses will be distributed statewide. The responding candidates' individual positions and brief narrative replies can also be accessed at <http://www.ncaddnj.org/publicaffairs/eguide2005.htm>.

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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