

## **Eliminating Alcohol Advertising on Philadelphia’s Public Property: A Case Study**

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- Where** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- When** April through December 2003
- Who** Pennsylvania Field Office of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth  
National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery  
Philadelphia City Council  
Philadelphia Office of the Mayor
- What** Ordinance banning alcohol advertising on city-owned and city-controlled property in Philadelphia.
- Why** Thousands of children begin their daily trips to school at bus shelters owned by the city of Philadelphia. As in other areas, these bus shelters carry advertising to supplement local tax revenues and dwindling state and federal funds. As of early 2003, many of the shelters featured life-sized alcoholic beverage ads, adding an unexpected lesson to students’ school days.
- Research indicates that exposure to alcohol advertising affects young people’s beliefs about drinking, intentions to drink, and drinking behavior.<sup>1</sup> Underage drinking is a serious—and deadly—public health problem. Every day, 7,000 kids under age 16 take their first full drink of alcohol.<sup>2</sup> Three teens die every day when they drink and drive; at least six others die every day from other alcohol-related injuries.<sup>3</sup> With these and other facts in mind, the city’s advocates and policymakers saw alcohol advertising on the Philadelphia bus shelters used daily by students as cause for concern.
- The city of Philadelphia’s role as property owner of the shelters is integral to this story. The city changed its public policy regarding these shelters and other city-owned or controlled property in 2003 because, as recognized by the City Council, it chose to “play a positive role in reducing exposure of youth to alcohol advertisements.”<sup>4</sup>
- How** The advocates who worked with City Council members and the mayor’s office to achieve this ban were successful because:

1. They conducted detailed research into the problem.
2. They used facts to quantify their concerns.
3. They clearly articulated the problem and a means of solving it.
4. They found strong leaders in supportive policymakers.
5. They had a flexible plan and a back-up plan.
6. They carefully weighed the role of the media in their strategy.
7. They were polite and persistent in pursuing change.

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## **Introduction**

The photograph was difficult to ignore. It was a simple, candid snap shot included in letters to the Philadelphia mayor and City Council members, but it conveyed a clear and present problem. In it, a woman with a preschool-aged little girl and a slightly older young boy wait for a bus at an outdoor bus shelter. The young girl dangles a Barbie doll upside-down from one hand; the woman holds her other hand. It's a normal, everyday scene, yet the photo that captured it would help usher in a new Philadelphia city law within a matter of months.

What caught the attention of those who saw the photograph was the beer advertisement behind the woman and children. Life-sized and posted on the inside of the bus shelter, the ad depicts a young woman stretching seductively, her eyes closed and her body and clothing turned into a bottle of Michelob beer. The children are probably too young to read the graffiti scrawled across the ad: "Stop objectifying women's bodies!" Yet, the photo makes it clear that, just by waiting for their bus to arrive, the little girl and the little boy were surrounded by all of the messages about drinking and sexuality the beer ad on the shelter contained.

It was the spring of 2003 when this photograph began making its way around Philadelphia's City Hall. Two local advocates had begun using it to speak out against the alcohol ads on the bus shelters throughout Philadelphia—a form of alcohol marketing they believed local underage youth were likely to see on a frequent basis. The advocates, Reverend Jesse Brown and Patrick Norton, thought these highly visible ad placements on bus shelters used by many young people were inappropriate given the problems caused by underage drinking. The photograph, taken by Reverend Brown, had become their symbol of what this advertising meant for the city and its youth.

From idea to photograph to ordinance, the process leading to a ban on alcohol advertising on Philadelphia's city-owned and city-controlled property spanned nine months in 2003. The process was influenced by the specifics of the community in which it took place, but it offers general lessons to those interested in pursuing policy change around alcohol industry marketing.

## **The Problem**

In 2003, 29.8 percent of Philadelphia high school students reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that they had had a drink in the past month, and more than 12 percent reported having had at least five drinks on one or more occasions during that month.<sup>5</sup>

These high rates of underage alcohol use can lead to serious consequences. In the same CDC survey, nearly a quarter of Philadelphia high school students reported having ridden in a car during the past month with a driver who had been drinking. Alcohol is involved in the three leading causes of death among young people: homicides, suicides, and

unintentional injuries, including traffic crashes.<sup>6</sup> And alcohol is linked to risky sexual behavior by young people as well. Twenty-four percent of teens ages 15 to 17 surveyed by the Kaiser Family Foundation said that their alcohol or drug use has led them to do more sexually than they had planned.<sup>7</sup> Another study has found that teenage girls who binge drink are 63 percent more likely to become teen mothers.<sup>8</sup>

Alcohol marketing is understood by many to be part of the problem, particularly when it comes to ads glamorizing alcohol use in venues where underage youth are disproportionately likely to see them. Public health research has found that youth exposure to alcohol advertising increases awareness of that advertising, which in turn influences young people's beliefs about drinking, intentions to drink, and drinking behavior.<sup>9</sup> The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has noted that, "While many factors may influence an underage person's drinking decisions, including among other things parents, peers, and the media, there is reason to believe that advertising also plays a role."<sup>10</sup>

In early 2003, Reverend Jesse Brown was already well aware of the problems caused by underage drinking and youth exposure to alcohol advertising. A longtime community activist, Brown is founder and executive director of the National Association of African Americans for Positive Imagery (NAAAPI) and has served as a Lutheran pastor in Philadelphia for more than a decade. Brown has been involved in a number of high-profile campaigns about alcohol and tobacco marketing as part of NAAAPI's mission "to mobilize communities to live a healthy lifestyle, promote positive imagery among individuals and communities, and to foster environments free of health disparities."

Patrick Norton began working with Reverend Brown and NAAAPI in early 2003, just as Brown began planning to do something about the bus shelter ads. Norton had been hired as Pennsylvania field director for the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at Georgetown University, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Norton, who had past experience as an aide for the Washington, DC City Council, would work from NAAAPI's Philadelphia headquarters to brief policymakers and the public about CAMY research. Brown and Norton believed that CAMY's reports quantifying youth exposure to alcohol advertising in magazines, on television, and on the radio, were a powerful resource they could use in their campaign against the bus shelter alcohol ads.

## **Finding Facts**

Before they made any decisions about how to address the problem, Brown and Norton needed to make sure they were armed with information about the current situation and possible solutions. Norton began by making "a million phone calls" and collecting information from relevant Web sites. He read two years of news coverage about the Philadelphia City Council in local newspapers, looked for contracts used for the bus shelters, and tried to learn as much as he could about how Philadelphia's city government might handle this issue.

To his surprise, Norton discovered that the bus shelters located within the city limits of Philadelphia were not owned by the local bus company, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). Instead, they were owned by the city of Philadelphia, which then contracted with a private company for the shelters' construction, maintenance and advertising. Obviously, then, any policy change around the alcohol ads would need to come directly from the city and not from SEPTA, which ran the buses but had no control over the bus shelters or their ads.

Norton therefore turned to looking for any events or statements concerning alcohol advertising or similar issues that might tell him more about how to begin approaching city representatives. In his search through news stories, Norton discovered that in 1998, the Philadelphia City Council had passed a resolution encouraging SEPTA to ban alcohol and tobacco advertising in its stations, buses, subways, trolleys, and regional rail cars: "The removal of tobacco and alcohol advertising will grant our children and our citizens who ride SEPTA a reprieve from the constant bombardment of advertisements presented in mass media that glamorize smoking and drinking," it had stated, as well as, "The revenue SEPTA would receive from advertising tobacco and alcohol on their buses, subways and trains in no way begins to make up for the millions of dollars spent treating illnesses linked to the use and abuse of tobacco and alcohol, or for the loss of lives associated with the long-term use of these products."<sup>11</sup>

It seemed to Norton that a clear contradiction existed between the city's past statements and current city policy on these alcohol ads, with some strange effects. With the city's encouragement, SEPTA buses operating in Philadelphia had been prohibited from carrying alcohol advertising. Yet, because of current city policy, a young person in Philadelphia could stand next to a five-foot-tall beer advertisement while waiting for a SEPTA bus prohibited from carrying that same ad to arrive. Furthermore, since SEPTA, and not the city, owned the bus shelters located outside of city limits, alcohol ads were already prohibited from suburban bus shelters under the terms of SEPTA's 1998 ban. Therefore, as another outcome of city policy, the often poorer youth living within city limits continued to see alcohol ads on the bus shelters they used, while young people in the wealthier suburban counties surrounding the city did not. One Council member, Frank Rizzo Jr., had seen the same discrepancies and had tried to correct them by introducing an ordinance removing alcohol ads from all city-owned property in Philadelphia. Yet his attempts, made soon after the SEPTA resolution passed, had not gone any further than the initial introduction of a bill.

Norton saw some good arguments for change in these contradictions, and the fact that Councilman Rizzo was still serving on the City Council was promising. Now he needed the statistics to support why city policymakers should continue to care about alcohol advertising and why they should turn their attention to the city's bus shelters. He began gathering statistics on the percentages of youth in Philadelphia and nationwide who drink and binge drink, using federal surveys like the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey, and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS). He also drew together facts about the consequences of

underage drinking, including links between youth alcohol use and health problems, accidental deaths, risky sexual activity, crime and violence.

CAMY's research reports provided Norton with information about underage youth exposure to alcohol marketing: how much, where, and when. He and Brown had speculated that many young people were likely to use the shelters on a daily basis, and therefore to see the ads, but Norton knew it would also help to back this up with facts. Though he couldn't find exact ridership data for city buses, Norton did discover from his phone calls and Web research that the School District of Philadelphia purchased subway and bus tokens from SEPTA to provide free and reduced-rate transportation to school for at least 27,000 students.<sup>12</sup> Many of these students' daily commutes, paid for by the city, would have started from or ended at one of these shelters—possibly one with an alcohol ad.

### **Building a Strategy**

Brown and Norton agreed that the most direct route to policy change would be an amendment in the city's current bus shelter contract to prohibit ads for alcohol. In looking at the contract, they saw at least two similar clauses with other restrictions, making this change seem possible. They also saw one drawback to this idea: the original contract had a clause that would hold Viacom—the company currently maintaining the shelters and their ads—financially harmless for changes in city policy on alcohol advertising during the term of the contract. The fact that the city of Philadelphia might need to pay back any lost profits was of considerable concern. However, it seemed to the advocates that if they could sidestep this issue by asking for the amendment when a new contract was executed.

Brown and Norton now had a policy “ask” to start with: that the next bus shelter contract negotiated by Philadelphia's city government include a provision prohibiting alcohol advertising on the shelters. They knew that having a good, reasonable request from the beginning was important, but—as would in fact happen during the process—the policy they were asking the city to implement might also change. Gathering broad, more general support for this issue would be important for that very reason.

In terms of whom to approach in City Hall, they knew that winning support from the mayor's office on this matter was essential because the city's executive branch was in charge of the contract. They also knew that the City Council had shown past concern about this issue in their SEPTA resolution and that the Council's support could be influential in contract change. Brown and Norton therefore decided to pursue two tracks of outreach at once: an administrative track with the mayor's office to add a clause to a renewed contract, and a legislative track with the City Council to educate members about underage youth exposure to alcohol marketing. As they would learn, the wisdom in casting a wide net would ensure that they had supporters from all sides when it came to final policy change.

## **Advocacy and Action**

Once they had elected to pursue a two-track strategy, the next decision Brown and Norton made was to keep this issue at a low profile. Alcohol advertising was not one of the current hot topics in Philadelphia, so it seemed best in this situation to focus their efforts on educating policymakers. They decided not to actively pursue media coverage or a larger coalition unless they were convinced that the issue had stalled.

With their initial research completed, Norton, representing CAMY's Pennsylvania field office, and Reverend Brown, representing NAAAPI, co-signed letters to the mayor and to the members of the City Council who had seemed most supportive of Brown's past work on similar fronts. Their letters, which introduced CAMY's findings on alcohol advertising and expressed concern about the bus shelter ads, also reminded the mayor and Council members of the 1998 Council resolution urging SEPTA to go alcohol-ad-free. They enclosed with the letters a copy of their photograph of the young children in front of the racy bus shelter beer ad, suggested amending the bus shelter contract during an upcoming renegotiation as a solution, and sought further contact to speak more about the problem.

This initial mailing was followed by Norton, at times accompanied by Brown, meeting on a one-on-one basis with elected and appointed city officials. With each formal meeting, Norton spoke about the specific situation—the alcohol ads on bus shelters used by youth—as well as about the general problem: underage drinking and youth exposure to alcohol marketing, often using CAMY reports. Among the first few meetings on the mayoral track was one that both Brown and Norton attended with Mayor John F. Street's chief of staff and deputy chief of staff. The mayor's office was generally supportive, but it was evident that the agenda for the immediate future was set. Brown and Norton didn't give up on contractual change, however, and as Norton continued meeting with Council members and their staff, he made a point of keeping the mayor's office informed.

Norton's first briefings with City Council members were with Councilman David Cohen and Councilman Michael Nutter. Based on past experience and his knowledge of the Philadelphia Council, Reverend Brown had recommended speaking to these two members as soon as possible. In addition to speaking in depth with the Council members, Norton reached out to their key staff members, knowing that their support would be integral to the Council members' continued interest.

These scheduled and more formal meetings were helpful, but Norton found that an even better way to keep this issue present in City Hall was through more frequent, informal contact with those interested in the issue. He made sure to keep his key contacts up to date and informed, always being careful not to pester or take too much time from the busy staff members he had already briefed. Calling, e-mailing, or informally stopping by an office to see if a staff member had a few minutes to speak with him worked well if he had a new CAMY report to talk about, an important news article on the issue to share, or an update on how interest elsewhere in City Hall was progressing. He made it his rule of

thumb to try to make sure that those most interested and most likely to be supportive heard from him in some way at least every two weeks.

Having a clearly articulated policy goal—removing alcohol advertising from city-owned bus shelters serving a large school-aged population—made the proposal easy to understand and very difficult to disagree with. Yet, despite the interest they had begun to generate, Brown and Norton soon realized that their outreach may have come too late in the contractual process. That same spring, they learned that the Viacom contract had been extended through 2005 without a provision restricting alcohol advertising. While the mayor supported their work as a quality of life issue, the contract renewal could not be slowed. Brown and Norton were disappointed but knew that their two-track strategy had been wise. The City Council’s interest still seemed encouraging, making the contract extension more a bump in the road than a disaster.

At the end of May, Brown and Norton sent another co-signed letter, this time to all the members of the Philadelphia City Council. Explaining that the bus shelter advertising contract had already been executed, they asked the Council to renew its efforts to reduce youth exposure to alcohol advertising. Norton had tried to keep all policy options open during his meetings on contract change for the bus shelters; because of this, he and Brown were now able to switch strategies to a new policy “ask”—an alcohol ad ban applying to all city-owned and controlled property. In their letter, he and Brown suggested that Council action to prohibit the advertising of alcohol on Philadelphia’s public property would both remove the bus shelter alcohol ads and prevent any similar type of alcohol advertising in the future. They reminded the Council that despite any financial concerns, such a policy change would be an opportunity to promote children’s health and welfare by reducing their exposure to alcohol ads.

### **Pursuing the Alcohol Ad Ban**

By this time, the summer season was beginning, and the combination of travel and election year turmoil slowed City Hall to a glacial pace. Norton continued to contact City Council members and staff, as well as the mayor’s office, with phone calls and letters that now focused on their new strategy and aimed at merely holding on to steady Council interest during this period.

After Labor Day, the pace of meetings and informal briefings returned to earlier levels and the bus shelter issue finally began to move forward. In mid-September, Councilman Cohen sent a letter to Norton announcing the intent to draft an ordinance. As chairman of the Council’s Committee on Law and Government, he also requested technical assistance from Norton and his colleagues at CAMY. However, the onset of a heated election season still threatened progress on the issue.

In mid-October, Norton attended a staff meeting of aides to three supportive City Council members: Cohen, Nutter, and at-large Councilman Angel Ortiz, who had also indicated strong interest. Councilman Nutter’s aide, Julia Chapman, brought for the first time her clear memory of Council history on similar issues, having retrieved previously



unavailable copies of the ban proposed by Councilman Rizzo after the 1998 SEPTA resolution. This tangible reminder that the Council had been very concerned about the issue just a few years earlier helped to build momentum in the meeting, and soon after the meeting, Julia Chapman asked the City of Philadelphia Law Department to draft an ordinance for Councilman Nutter to introduce, using the original 1998 Rizzo proposal as a model.

That Nutter and Chapman were the ones to follow through on a bill came as a surprise to Norton, given that Councilman Cohen had been the first to request his technical assistance. However, Norton recalled having seen Nutter's interest in preventing underage youth exposure to alcohol advertising grow over the summer. Having multiple college campuses located in Nutter's district generated a steady stream of complaints about alcohol-related incidents, so he was interested in working to prevent underage drinking. On October 30, 2003, Councilman Nutter introduced Bill 030713, a faithful redraft of the earlier Rizzo proposal. The proposal was referred to the Committee on Public Property and Public Works.

### **From Bill to Law**

The bill quickly won a number of cosponsors. Nutter, Ortiz and Rizzo were joined by Council members Mariano, Tasco, Reynolds Brown, Miller, Krajewski, Blackwell, DiCicco, Goode and Kenney, for a total of 12 sponsors. Since the number of co-sponsors was already greater than the number of votes required for passage, it was clear that the long string of briefings had had the desired impact. Chances for adoption already looked excellent.

Councilman Nutter, on behalf of the committee chairman, Councilman James Kenney, sent a letter requesting continued technical assistance from Norton and others at CAMY. Among the specific requests was CAMY's assistance in reviewing the ordinance draft. CAMY consulted with experts from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation who saw some technical flaws in the original draft of the bill. Court rulings passed after Councilman Rizzo had drafted the original bill in 1998 had clarified elements that needed to be present for limitations on alcohol advertising to be constitutional; some of these were still missing from the ordinance. Julia Chapman, working with the city law department, crafted an amendment that rectified those concerns by adding legislative findings on the extent of the underage drinking problem and links between underage drinking and youth exposure to alcohol advertising. These findings included data on levels of underage drinking nationally and in Philadelphia; its part in teen automobile deaths, sexual assaults, date rape, and unprotected sex among youth; and the effect of exposure to alcohol advertisements on young people's beliefs about drinking, intentions to drink, and drinking behavior. This helped the Council to demonstrate that its interest in creating the restrictions was substantial, that the restrictions directly advanced this interest, and that the restrictions were framed as narrowly as possible to serve this interest—all of which are critical to passing constitutional muster.<sup>13</sup>

While CAMY was reviewing the bill, representatives for two groups with concerns about the bill met with Councilman Nutter in separate meetings. During the first meeting, a lobbyist for the Philadelphia Eagles football team expressed concern for what the bill might mean for current alcohol advertising in the city-owned Veterans Stadium. The Eagles sought an amendment exempting the stadium and pledged their support for the proposal if amended. Nutter believed the original goal, eliminating youth exposure to alcohol advertising on bus shelters, could still be met if the Eagles' concerns were addressed. Therefore, the committee requested a draft amendment exempting professional sports venues from the ban. In the other meeting, a representative for Anheuser-Busch voiced general opposition to the bill as a restriction on the company's ability to advertise. No changes were made to the bill after this second meeting.

The bill was scheduled for a public hearing on November 18 with two amendments resulting from these events for the committee to consider—one adding legislative findings to the ordinance, and the other exempting professional sports venues. Consistent with their strategic decisions, neither local advocates nor the City Council cosponsors used the committee hearing to attract media attention. Also, no one spoke in opposition to the bill during the hearing, although the Anheuser-Busch lobbyist hand-delivered a letter to the committee to reiterate the company's concerns. Two invited speakers, Reverend Brown and Jim O'Hara, executive director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, testified briefly on the problems of underage drinking and youth exposure to alcohol marketing. The Commissioner of the Department of Public Property, Andres Perez, Jr., also spoke in support as a representative from the city's administration. After these three brief presentations, the committee voted unanimously in favor of the ban, both amendments were adopted, and the amended bill was referred to the full Council for final passage.

The final meeting of the 2003 Philadelphia City Council would be the bill's last chance for passage before the newly elected Council convened in January. If the Council passed it, the mayor would then have to sign it before the end of the year for it to become law. Though they were sure that the Council would pass it, and though the appearance of Commissioner Perez at the hearing meant that the mayor supported the bill, Brown and Norton had been uncertain of how strong the support really was. The ordinance was adopted by the Council on a voice vote without a single objection, and, ten days later, Mayor Street signed the ordinance without any objection. As ordered by the city of Philadelphia, any future contract permitting advertising on city-owned or controlled property would also need to prohibit alcohol advertising. The only city property exempt from the prohibition was that used for professional sporting events.

### **Effects of the Ban**

Enactment of the bill meant that beginning in 2006, or with any prior contract renegotiation, alcohol ads would disappear from Philadelphia's bus shelters. Brown and Norton's achievement also included having found a policymaker to continue taking the lead on this issue. On February 11, Norton received a letter from Councilman Nutter thanking him and CAMY for "the tremendous assistance [they] provided ... on this

legislation,” and expressing interest in exploring “additional actions the City can take to limit the exposure of our youth to alcohol ads.”

Despite these victories, there was some disappointment that the ban was not immediate. The extended Viacom bus shelter contract ran through 2005, giving Viacom the right to retain alcohol advertising on the shelters until then. Nutter, Brown, Norton, and CAMY had all hoped that Viacom would act under the intent of the law and begin reducing the number of alcohol ads before it becomes legally required to do so. As of early 2005, however, alcohol ads persisted on bus shelters throughout Philadelphia.

Perhaps as important as the bus shelter ban, some unanticipated consequences of the bill will shape Philadelphia’s alcohol environment for years to come. Urban areas are increasingly raising revenue by selling the naming rights to public structures, essentially turning public buildings into advertising vehicles. Examples include the Dollar Bank Ballroom and Convention Center in Pittsburgh, the Staples Center in Los Angeles, and the Summit Arena in Hot Springs, Arkansas, all resulting from corporate purchases of naming rights to those properties. The city of Philadelphia also began discussing the sale of naming rights in early 2004. Because of the new ban, alcohol products will never become part of the discussion. For this, and for so many other advertising possibilities that may come in the future, it is fortunate that the broad strokes used to include bus shelters in the ordinance also encompassed all city-owned and controlled property. Philadelphia’s city government had taken concrete action to, as the ordinance put it, “play a positive role in reducing exposure of youth to alcohol advertising.”

## **Lessons Learned**

### **1) Understand the history behind a current policy.**

Accurate and timely information builds an advocate’s credibility as a stakeholder in an issue. It also ensures that a policy solution will meet the precise needs of the community it serves. In terms of the Philadelphia ban, Norton’s detailed “fact-finding” was beneficial to every step of his work. For example, knowing about the SEPTA resolution encouraged Brown and Norton to begin seeking City Council support from the very beginning and would be integral to their success. And, by having a full picture of the current situation, they were able to anticipate and respond to possible arguments against their plan.

### **2) Know the numbers and what they mean.**

Accurate statistics on the extent and consequences of the problem were important throughout this process, from their use in the advocates’ initial letters and briefings to their appearance in the final ordinance language. In terms of policy change around alcohol marketing, certain types of information are particularly useful. First, being able to give the percentages and the actual numbers of young people who currently drink and binge drink, both locally and nationally, helps demonstrate the breadth of the underage drinking problem. The studies that Norton used, mentioned above, are all public and can

be accessed on the Web.<sup>14</sup> Second, it is important to show *why* these numbers on underage drinking matter. Many people know that underage drinking causes problems but can't extrapolate that general knowledge into specific risks to the children they know. Facts on the toll of underage drinking in local communities and across the country make the risks more real to policymakers.<sup>15</sup> It is also necessary to show why alcohol marketing is part of the problem—why young people should be exposed to less alcohol advertising. In Philadelphia, presenting the estimates of the number of young people who were using the bus shelters—and, therefore, who might frequently see alcohol ads on them—was integral to arguments for policy change. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine report *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility* offers other strong arguments for why reducing youth exposure to alcohol marketing should be part of any strategy to prevent underage drinking.<sup>16</sup>

### **3) Present a clear problem and a specific solution.**

Public officials are busy people. Approaching them with a well-defined, easy-to-understand problem makes their interest and engagement on it much more likely. Brown and Norton were able to summarize what they wanted in a way that made sense and expressed an obvious solution: to have alcohol advertising removed from the city-owned bus shelters used by many students and young people. They also suggested the means of doing so: a change in the bus shelter contract, or, later, a ban on alcohol ads on public property. With this legwork already done for them, city policymakers were more willing to consider offering their support.

### **4) Look for effective leaders in supportive policymakers.**

Changing public policy is a difficult and complex task at every level of government. Success is more likely when there is a supportive staff member or official who knows how to navigate procedural issues and make a proposal into a policy priority

In this case, Reverend Brown had worked for years on alcohol and tobacco advertising issues, and had a sense for who in City Hall might be most interested in the issue. However, if Norton hadn't had Brown's experience as a resource, a search through Philadelphia news coverage might have brought him to similar conclusions. Knowing more about each policymaker's past and current work allowed Norton to relate the bus shelter alcohol ad problem to their respective concerns and initiatives. He was also able to gauge how effective they had been in past pursuits. Effective elected officials are also more likely to have skilled and equally effective staff members. Councilman Nutter's aide, Julia Chapman, is a good example of this: she had both the institutional memory and the know-how to quickly turn the alcohol ad ban idea into a bill.

### **5) Develop a flexible plan and a backup plan.**

The importance of Brown and Norton's two-track strategy in achieving the eventual ban cannot be overemphasized. That Norton had also met with and pursued support from City Council members prevented a serious delay when he realized that the Viacom

contract had been renewed without a ban. Similarly, close contact with the mayor's staff, even after it was clear the Council would take action, was critical to securing Mayor Street's support and his signature after Council adoption.

Achieving successful policy change requires some creativity in imagining all the various ways that change may occur. While it may seem at first that identifying one bulletproof strategy is the way to go, working multiple tracks of outreach at once, or even just having other plans to fall back on, will make a proposal much more likely to succeed in the long run. Keeping lines of communication open among all of the various policymakers involved also ensures that there are fewer surprises and that a greater number will be more likely to support the final policy solution.

#### **6) Don't assume media attention will always help your efforts.**

Pursuing the ban on alcohol advertising on city-owned property was a different type of issue from others on which Brown and Norton had worked. For example, Brown's past work to prevent R.J. Reynolds from test marketing Uptown cigarettes in Philadelphia had involved a coalition of activists and a national media strategy that had generated a number of newspaper stories and television interviews across the country. The Coalition Against Uptown Cigarettes had effected change by drawing wide public attention to an inappropriate practice. When it came to pursuing this ban, however, it was obvious that there were other effective tools at the advocates' disposal.

Brown, Norton, and their colleagues at CAMY understood that this ban called for a different type of strategy. Not only was Philadelphia's bus shelter advertising an issue that they were pursuing only on a local level, but it was also an election year, and drawing wide public attention could have changed the type of policymaker interest they were generating. It was also apparent that contracts controlling advertising on the shelters and other city property were seen by many in the city's government as an internal management issue. By trying to understand and present the issue as policymakers were likely to see it, Brown and Norton avoided alienating those with whom they hoped to work. In this case, using the media to apply pressure might have brought headlines, but probably not success.

#### **7) Persistence works; so can representative government.**

At the heart of Brown and Norton's success was their belief that, by presenting a genuine problem and a reasonable solution, they could influence their elected officials to act. The ban on alcohol advertising on Philadelphia's public property was more likely to succeed because Norton, who conducted much of the outreach, showed extraordinary patience and made good use of the months that the process took. By contacting and re-contacting Council members and the mayor's staff, including during the summer, he kept the issue on the city's policy agenda.

What they did worked. Brown and Norton's thoroughly researched, well-defined and reasonable proposal; good grasp of the problem and the multiple issues it involved; and

flexible but persistent plan were a formula for success. And, central to the outcome from the very beginning was their strong and unwavering conviction that, to protect the health and safety of Philadelphia's youth, those bus shelter alcohol ads needed to go.

February 2005

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<sup>1</sup> R.L. Collins et al., "Predictors of beer advertising awareness among eighth graders," *Addiction* 98 (2003): 1297-1306; S.E. Martin et al., "Alcohol Advertising and Youth," *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 26 (2002): 900-906.

<sup>2</sup> Calculated using the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. J. Gfroerer of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, e-mail to David H. Jernigan, PhD, 14 Sept 2004.

<sup>3</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Traffic Safety Facts 2002*, Early ed. (Washington, DC: National Center for Statistics and Analysis, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2003), 114; D.T. Levy, T.R. Miller, K. Stewart, R. Spicer, *Underage Drinking: Immediate Consequences and Their Costs* (Calverton, MD: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, July 1999).

<sup>4</sup> The Philadelphia Code, §17-110, "Alcohol Advertisements."

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Online: Comprehensive Results*, using the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Available at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/> (cited 20 Nov 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Laura Kann et al., "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 1999," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 49 (2000): 1-96. American Medical Association, "Facts About Youth and Alcohol." Available at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/3566.html> (cited 20 Nov 2004).

<sup>7</sup> The Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, "Substance Use and Risky Sexual Behavior: Attitudes and Practices Among Adolescents and Young Adults," *Survey Snapshot* (February 2002). Available at <http://www.kff.org/youth/hivstds/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=14907> (Accessed 20 Nov 2004).

<sup>8</sup> T.S. Dee, "The Effects of Minimum Legal Drinking Ages on Teen Childbearing," *The Journal of Human Resources* 36, no. 4 (2001): 824-838.

<sup>9</sup> R.L. Collins et al., "Predictors of beer advertising awareness among eighth graders," *Addiction* 98 (2003): 1297-1306; S.E. Martin et al., "Alcohol Advertising and Youth," *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 26 (2002): 900-906.

<sup>10</sup> Federal Trade Commission, *Self-Regulation in the Alcohol Industry: A Review of Industry Efforts to Avoid Promoting Alcohol to Underage Consumers* (Washington, DC: Federal Trade Commission, 1999), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Council of the City of Philadelphia, Resolution No. 980113.

<sup>12</sup> School District of Philadelphia, "About Us." Available at <http://www.philsch.k12.pa.us/aboutus/> (cited 20 Nov 2004).

<sup>13</sup> See e.g., J.F. Mosher and S. Saetta, *Commentaries on: Model State Statute for Regulating Billboard and Other Forms of Alcohol Advertising*, prepared for the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (Felton, CA: PIRE, 2004). Available at <http://camy.org/action/legalresources.php> (cited 28 January 2005).

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/> for NIDA's Monitoring the Future, <http://oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda.htm> for SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, and <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm> for the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (cited 20 Nov 2004).

<sup>15</sup> CAMY's Web site offers useful fact sheets for this purpose, such as "The Toll of Underage Drinking," available at <http://camy.org/factsheets/>.

<sup>16</sup> See "Alcohol Industry" chapter in particular. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, R.J. Bonnie and M.E. O'Connell, eds. (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2004), 125-44. Available at <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309089352/html/> (cited 20 Nov 2004).