



CONGRESSWOMAN

ROSA L. DELAURO

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*NEWS RELEASE*

For Immediate Release

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**Statement of the Hon. Rosa DeLauro (D CT) on the introduction  
of the "STOP Underage Drinking Act"**

*Washington, DC Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro (D CT) released the following statement today in regard to the introduction of the "Sober Truth On Preventing Underage Drinking" or "STOP Underage Drinking Act". The bipartisan, bi-cameral measure was drafted by Senators Mike DeWine and Chris Dodd, along with Representatives Lucile Roybal-Allard, Frank Wolf, Tom Osborne, Zach Wamp, and Rosa DeLauro. The bill models the Institute Of Medicine (IOM) report released last September, which detailed the scope of the underage drinking problem, and gave a number of recommendations toward addressing it. The measure addresses many of the recommendations. DeLauro's statement is below.*

Last September, many of the members here today joined together to discuss the release of the Institute of Medicine report which laid out in stark detail the serious problem of underage drinking, and the roadmap by which our society could tackle that problem. Since that time, we have worked together to draft the STOP Underage Drinking Act, a bipartisan bill which is based on that report and which is a first step down that road - not a magic bullet by any means, but a solid foundation to enable us to begin to address a very serious problem.

Today, the average age that children start drinking is 13, and nearly 7.2 million young people describe themselves as "binge drinkers." That is a shocking figure in and of itself,

but what makes it so significant is that children who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop a problem with alcohol than those who wait until the age of 21.

This is not just a harmless coming-of-age experience, as too many people seem to think it is. Alcohol plays a role in the three leading causes of death among young people - suicide, homicide and accidental injuries like car accidents and drownings. New research shows that early heavy alcohol use may also have negative effects on the actual physical development of the brain, and may lead to decreased ability in planning and executive functioning, memory, spatial operations, and attention. The overall cost of alcohol use by young people was a stunning \$53 billion in 1996.

It will take a coordinated national and community-level response to change the norms of our society and eliminate underage drinking, and this bill will set the framework for that effort. As my colleagues have said, this bill will coordinate efforts within the federal government that are aimed at preventing underage drinking. It will also create a state report card so we can measure what is happening outside of Washington on this effort, formally authorize a national media campaign geared at adults, and create funding for community interventions. Overall, this bill will authorize almost \$20 million to combat underage drinking.

It won't be easy to teach our children that what they may see as a rite of passage is in fact putting their very futures at risk. But when you see the energy and enthusiasm in the faces of the young people with us today, and really throughout the room, I'm confident that we can do it. And I look forward to gathering with this impressive group of members and advocates again to celebrate the passage of the STOP Underage Drinking Act.

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