



MADD

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Press Release

MADD Says New Underage Drinking Prevention Bill Activates NAS Recommendations and is First Substantial Step Since 21 Law in Helping Solve America's No. 1 Youth Drug Problem

Accolades to Seven Congressional Members for Taking Action

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WASHINGTON (July 21, 2004) - - Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) joined seven members of Congress to mark the first substantial step in underage drinking prevention since the enactment of the National 21 Minimum Drinking Age Act . It was just less than a week ago that the nation marked the 20th anniversary of the 21 law, the most effective piece of legislation in the drunk driving and underage drinking arenas in America's history. This law is credited with saving more than 20,000 young lives. The prevention bill introduced today responds to critical recommendations released in the fall of 2003 from the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) and provides leadership and funding for community education, enforcement and research to address this devastating problem.

The new legislation, introduced by Senators Michael DeWine (R-OH) and Christopher Dodd (D-CT), and Representatives Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Frank Wolf (R-VA), Zach Wamp (R-TN), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Tom Osborne (R-NE), includes: 1) increased federal government leadership and coordination on underage drinking prevention efforts through the formation of a federal interagency coordinating committee with the goal of showing measurable reductions in underage drinking; 2) funding for a national media campaign on underage drinking aimed at adults; 3) resources for communities to increase enforcement of underage drinking laws including compliance check programs to make sure retail establishments are not selling alcohol to minors; and, 4) funding for additional research and data collection to better understand ways in which the nation can combat this problem.

"This legislation serves as a wake-up call to parents and other adults who make it easy for kids to drink alcohol despite the dangerous grip of underage drinking on society," said Wendy J. Hamilton, MADD national president. "Underage drinking is the nation's No. 1 youth drug problem and it is finally getting some of the much-needed attention it deserves."

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MADD SAYS NEW UNDERAGE BILL FIRST SUBSTANTIAL STEP

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MADD testimony and science-based recommendations were provided to Members of Congress and the NAS committee, many of which were included in the underage drinking prevention bill.

The estimated annual costs of underage drinking is \$53 billion and only \$71 million of the federal government's fiscal year 2000 budget was allocated for the prevention of underage drinking. On the flip side, there was \$1.8 billion spent on the drug war and billions continue to be spent by the alcohol industry on alcohol advertising and promotion.

"This new bill provides a foundation for growth in tackling underage drinking. Ultimately, political leadership and the targeted use of funds will result in much-needed action and lives saved," said Hamilton. "Protecting future generations from alcohol dependency and drunk driving should be a top public health priority."

Underage drinking kills 6,000 people annually due to traffic crashes, homicides, suicides and unintentional injuries and alcohol-related traffic fatalities involving youth ages 15 to 20 are continuing to increase again to more than 2,400 deaths annually.

MADD aims to change environmental factors fueling underage drinking through its Youth In Action teams, which educate communities about limiting youth alcohol access by working with law enforcement and other safety leaders and by reaching younger kids through *Protecting You, Protecting Me*, an elementary curriculum that teaches students how to protect their brains and to stay safe in unsafe situations. Research shows that youth who begin drinking at early ages are more likely in the future to become alcohol dependent and to drive drunk.

Founded in 1980, MADD's mission is to stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime and prevent underage drinking. MADD is a 501(3) non-profit with approximately 600 affiliates and 2 million members and supporters. For more information, please visit www.madd.org or call (800) GET-MADD.

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