

# Resolution to Reduce Alcohol Related Problems and Underage Drinking in Minnesota

**WHEREAS**, four out of ten Minnesota children take their first drink before age 14<sup>1</sup>, and youth who use alcohol before age 15 are four times more likely to be alcohol dependent than adults whose first drink occurs after reaching the legal age of 21<sup>2</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS**, alcohol plays a key role in the leading causes of death among youth (accidents, homicides, and suicides) and is responsible for six times more youthful deaths than all illicit drugs combined<sup>3</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS**, in 2004, 9.1% of Minnesota adults reported symptoms for substance abuse or dependence, yet only about 7% of those Minnesotans (4.5% of those with alcohol disorder and 16.5% of those with drug disorders) received treatment<sup>4</sup>, of which 55% was publicly-funded<sup>5</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS**, every year alcohol problems cost the state of Minnesota about \$4.5 billion in lost productivity, motor vehicle crashes, health care, criminal justice, and related costs<sup>6</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS**, Minnesota is facing a budget shortfall and desperately needs resources to support public safety, law enforcement, treatment, detox services, and prevention of alcohol problems; and,

**WHEREAS**, increases in state excise taxes on alcohol have been recommended by many organizations, including the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Medical Association, and the multi-agency Minnesota Summit on Alcohol and Other Drug Issues convened by the National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (2005); and,

**WHEREAS**, Minnesota's alcohol excise charges on beer and liquor have not been increased since 1987, allowing inflation to erode significantly this source of state revenue; and,

**WHEREAS**, an increase in the alcohol excise tax equivalent to a nickel per drink would generate \$112 million in additional state revenue each year, which could be used to provide funding for programs and services that would improve the lives of Minnesota families and communities,

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that this caucus urges the state party to include a plank that endorses legislation to increase the alcohol excise tax by an equivalent of five cents per drink, the proceeds of which should support funding for public safety, law enforcement, treatment, detox services, and prevention of alcohol problems.

<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Department of Education. *Minnesota Student Survey, 2004*. ([www.mnschoolhealth.com/resources.html?ac=data](http://www.mnschoolhealth.com/resources.html?ac=data))

<sup>2</sup> Hingson, R.W., et al. (2000). Age of drinking onset and unintentional injury involvement after drinking. *JAMA*. 284(12):1527-1533.

<sup>3</sup> CDC. *Surveillance Summaries*, May 21, 2004. MMWR. 2004:53 (No. SS-2).

<sup>4</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services. *Estimating the Treatment Need for Substance Abuse in Minnesota: 2004/2005 Minnesota Survey on Adult Substance Use*. January 2006. ([www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/healthcare/documents/pub/dhs\\_id\\_055443.pdf](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/healthcare/documents/pub/dhs_id_055443.pdf))

<sup>5</sup> Minnesota Office Legislative Auditor. *Substance Abuse Treatment*. February 2006. ([www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2006/subabuse.htm](http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2006/subabuse.htm))

<sup>6</sup> Minnesota Department of Health. *The Human and Economic Costs of Alcohol Use in Minnesota*. January 2004. ([www.health.state.mn.us/alcohol](http://www.health.state.mn.us/alcohol))

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