

The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices
to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms



GOING THE DISTANCE: Time for Higher Alcohol Taxes in Nebraska

Strong evidence points to the value of increasing alcohol price to reduce harms



At the May Project Extra Mile coalition meeting, Matt Walz of the South Dakota Alcohol Policy Alliance (SDAPA) talked about his coalition's effort to [increase alcohol excise taxes](#) in that state. Although this first effort fell short, the support and attention generated were very encouraging in a state where the word "tax" is often a non-starter. The primary rationale for the measure was that alcohol should be "budget neutral rather than a drain on the resources and the economy of South Dakota." A resolution supported by the SDAPA noted that "alcohol caused around \$600 million of harms in South Dakota, while taxes and other revenue produced around \$20 million for state government." (In Nebraska, alcohol

causes about about [\\$1.6 billion of harms](#) annually, while producing only [\\$28 million in tax revenue](#)).

Higher alcohol taxes make sense for Nebraska, too, for a number of reasons.

- **Alcohol taxes save lives.** The research is overwhelming. Literally hundreds

of studies have shown that [increasing alcohol taxes helps prevent and reduce a host of alcohol-related harms](#), including traffic crash deaths, sexually transmitted diseases, other related health conditions, violence, and crime. That is why many major medical and health advocacy groups - including the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, and the American Society of Clinical Oncology - support higher alcohol taxes for public health.

- **Our state badly needs the additional revenue.** Consult any source of Nebraska news and you'll see stories about budget shortfalls in the state, even though many of our programs and services have already been cut drastically. Even a modest increase in alcohol taxes in our state could bring in considerable additional revenues. A five cent-per-drink increase could increase the state's coffers by up to \$45 million in funds, while a twenty-five cent-per-drink increase could raise up to \$225 million (based on 2017 data).
- There is a **growing international movement** to increase alcohol (and other health) taxes to help limit the devastation of chronic diseases. Chronic diseases are responsible for the vast majority of deaths and health care costs (86%) in the U.S. Accordingly, the [World Health Organization](#) and other [high-level experts](#) have called for alcohol taxes to be increased as one part of the solution to this crisis.
- **Federal alcohol excise taxes were just lowered.** That opens up an opportunity for the state to (at least) make up the difference, since these taxes were lowered across the board.
- **The arguments used to stave off tax increases just don't hold water.** The alcohol industry - like their colleagues in the tobacco industry - have a number of excuses why states shouldn't raise alcohol taxes. They include claims that alcohol taxes are "regressive" and that they would cause job losses. None of them stand up to scrutiny.

MILES TO GO: Finding clarity on alcohol-related sexual assault

[It's time for honest discussion about a problem that isn't getting any better by ignoring it](#)

The [Lincoln Journal Star reported recently](#) that a young woman is bringing a lawsuit against UNL's Chi Phi fraternity "and several related organizations, saying they share responsibility for her being sexually assaulted at the fraternity house last year." The woman alleges that she was sexually assaulted after becoming incapacitated, following the consumption of two cups of " 'jungle juice' - a mixture of unknown hard liquors."



A lawsuit filed against Chi Phi fraternity in Lincoln claims fraternity leadership is partially to blame for the sexual assault last year at its house at 1143 S 17th St. Photo: PETER SALTER, *Journal Star*

This brings another opportunity for our community to address the problem of alcohol-related sexual assault. But there are two ways in which we can miss the mark in considering this issue. The first is a blame-the-victim approach that faults survivors for being assaulted, pointing to their behavior, dress, or location. An [ill-conceived 2011 prevention campaign in Pennsylvania](#) - and the resulting pushback - helps illustrate the dangers of this approach.

Another is to simply ignore the role that excessive alcohol consumption plays in sexual assault, both in [perpetration](#) and [victimization](#). For example, well-meaning writers have discussed the "false connection" between alcohol and domestic and sexual violence. The concern often motivating this minimization of alcohol's role is either that it diverts attention from broader societal issues (like structural sexism), or that it provides an excuse to perpetrators. Regardless, we have to be careful not to simply brush aside the large amount of research tying excessive drinking to sexual assault as if it's a non-factor.

With regard to perpetration, especially, research evidence points to troublesome physiological/neurological effects of alcohol consumption - as noted in the [study from UNL psychology researchers](#) which found that intoxicated men were more likely to sexually objectify women. In addition, hazing expert Hank Nuwer and others have documented the fraternity culture whereby young men are encouraged and even taught on how to use alcohol to incapacitate female party-goers. Indeed, the involvement of alcohol in sexual assault is so well-documented that it has been called "[the most dangerous 'date rape drug'](#)."

Perhaps some of the resistance to honest discussion about this problem is a reflection of how deeply embedded binge drinking behaviors are in our culture and at all levels of society.

Clearly, what is needed is more than just individual-level education. Changing the assault culture requires that we change the alcohol environment as well as transforming the broader culture to make sexual assault a thing of the past.

17 Omaha Area Businesses Cited for Selling Alcohol to Minors

In an effort to crack down on the availability of alcohol to minors, Omaha metro area law enforcement officers conducted compliance checks over the weekend resulting in 17 (6%) of the 290 retail outlets checked in Douglas and Sarpy Counties being cited for selling alcohol to a minor. Results can be found by [clicking here](#).

"With the school year winding down and summer break beginning, law enforcement knows how critical underage drinking enforcements are in preventing youth access to alcohol. One night of underage drinking can lead to unintended, tragic consequences for youth and the larger community," said Sgt. Chris Apley with the Nebraska State Patrol. "We're encouraged by the low non-compliant rate, but we know that this is possible only through regular enforcement of the law. This will be a continued focus for Omaha metro agencies throughout the summer."

Two repeat violators were cited for selling alcohol to minors:

Godfather's Pizza, 2929 N 204 Street, Omaha (5/2008);

Mangia Italiana, 6516 Irvington Road, Omaha (6/2015).

Only Mangia Italiana has a sale to minor that falls within the 4-year look back period used by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (LCC) to enhance penalties. If found guilty by the LCC, Mangia Italiana could be facing up to a two-day mandatory closure (no alcohol sales would be allowed) and an additional 30 days of suspension that could be paid off at \$100 per day, according to the LCC's [penalty guidelines](#).

Other businesses cited during the compliance checks would be facing their first sale to a minor violation, which would carry a 10- to 20-day suspension that could be paid off as a fine at \$50 per day.

46 officers from the Bellevue Police Department, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Nebraska State Patrol, Omaha Police Department, and Sarpy County Sheriff's Office participated in the two-day enhanced underage drinking enforcement effort. To assist in reporting underage drinking or adults providing alcohol to minors, call the statewide tip line at **1-866-Must-B-21 (687-8221)**. It's anonymous and it's the right call. Individuals are urged to call 911 to report an underage drinking party in progress.



NEWS BRIEFS



Sarpy County Sheriff Receives Award from MADD Nebraska

Sheriff Jeff Davis has championed TRACE and other important efforts

Sarpy County Sheriff Jeff Davis was presented with the Outstanding Education and Awareness Award from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Nebraska. Steven Benvenisti, author of the book *Spring Break: A True Story of Hope and Determination* presented the award to Davis.



This award demonstrates Sheriff Davis' passion for making his community safer and helping promote the MADD mission through raising awareness in the areas of impaired driving and underage drinking.

Project Extra Mile is proud to partner with Sheriff Davis and his team. We're especially grateful for his work on the TRACE (Target Responsibility for Alcohol-Connected Emergencies) program in Sarpy County. TRACE is a method of investigating the source of alcohol for incidents involving youth under the legal drinking age. As [the Sheriff has noted](#), TRACE is a "proactive, rather than reactive, approach to under-aged drinking

Be on the lookout for a TRACE enforcement/community training in late September. More details to follow.

Alcohol Policies Needed to Reduce Alcohol-Related Cancers

Leading cancer research organization makes the case clear

As we've noted before, alcohol consumption can raise the risk for several forms of cancer - including those of the head and neck, female breast, stomach, liver, and colorectum. For some of these cancers, the risk is elevated even at relatively light levels of consumption (less than a drink a day for female breast cancer).

The highly-anticipated report from the American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund - [Diet, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Cancer: A Global Perspective: The Third Expert Report](#) - not only provides recommendations for individuals, but also stresses the need for public policies which make healthier choices possible.

These recommendations include increasing alcohol taxes, and a number of other science-based, population-level alcohol policies. It should be noted that Project Extra Mile is a member of the Nebraska Cancer Coalition, and just attended the 2018 NE Cancer Summit to raise awareness and promote evidence-based policies that will reduce alcohol-related cancers in Nebraska.

If we're truly serious about fighting cancer in Nebraska, we'll need to embrace these policies - in addition to supporting research, treatment, and educational strategies.



Guest Speaker



Don Hoes
Keystone Treatment Center

We invite you to join us for **coffee and conversation** as we welcome Don Hoes from the Keystone Treatment Center, who will be talking about the prevention-treatment paradox.



Thank you for your involvement!

Jennifer Pollock

Jennifer Pollock, Coalition Chair

Omaha Metro Coalition Meeting

Wednesday
June 13, 2018
9:00 a.m.

MEETING LOCATION:

La Vista Police Department
Community Room
7701 S. 96th St, LaVista, NE

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