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Supersized Alcopops are Latest Public Health Threat

Marin Institute Releases Model Bill to Ban Caffeine and Bring Alcopops Down to Size

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (January 25, 2011) – Marin Institute, the alcohol industry watchdog, released model state legislation today to expand last year's federal ban on seven dangerous caffeinated alcoholic beverages by the Food and Drug Administration. The model bill also restricts the size and alcohol content of the newly reformulated products and other youth-friendly alcopops.

"The federal government action was a giant step forward to protect the public from products containing illegal stimulants such as caffeine," said Michele Simon, research and policy director at Marin Institute. *"Now it's time for states to codify the federal ruling, as well as protect the public health and safety by restricting high alcohol content, supersized alcopops*."

The beverages in question include Anheuser-Busch InBev's *Tilt* brand*,* Phusion Project's re-formulated *Four Loko* line, United Brands' reformulated *Joose* line and some of *Mike's Hard Lemonade* products. These beverages are sold in supersized 23.5 oz, single serving cans, with up to 12% alcohol content—the equivalent of 4.7 standard drinks of alcohol. The supersized drinks are flavored malt beverages known as "alcopops," sweet, bubbly and fruity beers known to appeal to underage youth.

"*Each supersized can of Tilt is the equivalent of drinking 4 to 5 regular beers; it's time to bring these monsters down to size,"* said Bruce Lee Livingston, Marin Institute's executive director. In the U.S., 10.7 million underage youth drink, and 7.2 million binge drink. Alcohol-related problems from underage drinking cost the country $60 billion annually. *"They took the caffeine out of their drinks, but now they are fueling youth binge drinking with giant single-serving cans of alcopops,"* added Livingston.

California, Illinois, Iowa, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Vermont currently have bills in the legislative pipeline to ban caffeinated alcoholic beverages. In 2010, similar bills were attempted in New Jersey, New York, California and Washington State. But that was before the federal government's landmark ruling, which included the Federal Trade Commission warning that the high-alcohol content, large-size containers themselves could be construed as deceptive marketing.

"In addition to the federal determination, state-level product bans are necessary to keep dangerous products off store shelves once and for all," explained Simon. *"As the primary regulators of alcoholic beverages, the states have full legal authority to ban dangerous alcoholic products like supersized alcopops. Our model bill offers states an important tool to help mitigate this devastating public health problem while ensuring that stimulant-laced products do not return to the market."*

For the past several years, since the 2007 release of the nation's first report on alcoholic energy drinks, Marin Institute has called on companies to stop making and marketing such products that appeal to youth, for states to ban or restrict them, and for the federal government to act as well.

The model legislation as well as background information is available at MarinInstitute.org.

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