



Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America

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CADCA ACTION ALERT

NBC DECIDES TO ALLOW HARD-LIQUOR ADS ON TV

January 23, 2002

BACKGROUND

In early December, General Electric's NBC ended a five-decade voluntary ban on hard-liquor advertisements on network television by entering into a multimillion-dollar contract with Guinness-UDV (whose brands include Tanqueray gin, Johnnie Walker scotch, Smirnoff Vodka, and Smirnoff Ice). NBC's decision to abandon its voluntary ban on hard-liquor ads will negatively affect the substance abuse, prevention and treatment field. Putting liquor ads on the most expansive, powerful media outlet, television, will increase teens exposure to alcohol and increase the pressure on them to drink. In addition, this action may encourage other networks to restart hard-liquor advertisements also. NBC does have advertising guidelines for alcohol products (attached) and has incorporated into their contract with Guinness-UDV that they will air 4 months of advertising promoting social responsibility, however these self-regulated rules and the ads will have the Guinness brand on them.

FACTS

- The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse reports that alcohol is a factor in the four leading causes of death among persons ages 10 to 24: motor-vehicle crashes, unintentional injuries, homicide, and suicide.
- 81 percent of teens agree that beer and liquor companies target underage drinkers or teenagers with their ads
- 78 percent of teens say that alcohol advertising contributes to underage drinking
- Once teenagers start drinking, they are more likely to experiment with other substances and engage in other risky behaviors. In 1999, Columbia's Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse discovered that teens under 15 who have ever consumed alcohol are twice as likely to engage in risky behaviors such as, have sex than those who have not.
- 78 percent of teens and 65 percent of adults say that alcohol advertising contributes to underage drinking
- 72 percent of Americans support keeping network television free of hard-liquor ads
- Of particular interest to underage drinkers are the new "alcopops." New to the alcohol scene, these drinks are appealing because of their taste, creative labeling, catchy names

and their easy availability to teenagers. 90 percent of teens agreed that drinking "alcopops" made it more likely that teenagers would try other alcoholic beverages. Alarming,ly, NBC's contract is with Guinness-UDV who produces Smirnoff Ice, a new and popular "alcopop".

CADCA's ACTIONS TO DATE

It is the belief of CADCA that ads for hard liquor on national television networks can only increase the pressure associated with underage drinking on children and teens by glamorizing and normalizing drinking. In response to NBC's actions, CADCA has signed a letter in conjunction with others in the prevention field to support the more responsible broadcasters (ABC, CBS and FOX) for refusing to accept hard-liquor ads and urging them to continue their voluntary ban.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- 1) Write CBS, ABC, FOX and the WB to applaud their resolve to continue to voluntarily ban hard-liquor advertisements (see **first sample letter below**)

Steven M. Bornstein
President of ABC Television
500 S. Buena Vista St.
Burbank, CA 91521 - 4771

K. Rupert Murdoch
Chairman and CEO
Fox Entertainment Group, Inc.
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

Dean Valentine
Chief Executive Officer
United Paramount Network
11800 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Mel Karmazin
President, COO, and Director
Viacom (CBS)
52nd Floor|
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10019

Jed Petrick
President and COO
The WB Television Network
4000 Warner Blvd., Bldg. 34R
Burbank, CA 91522

- 2) Write GE/NBC asking them to reverse their decision (see **second sample letter below**)

The following sample letters have been provided by the Center for Science in the Public Interest

SAMPLE LETTER TO ABC, CBS, FOX & WB

<Date>

<Name>
>Title>
<Address>
<Address>

As a representative of an organizations concerned about public health and young people, we want to thank you for your continued resolve to protect the well-being of our nation's children by upholding your longstanding voluntary ban on liquor advertisements. We commend **(ABC's/CBS's/FOX's/WB's)** recognition that liquor ads do not belong on network television. In keeping with your continued spirit of public service, we ask **(ABC/CBS/FOX/WB)** to make a 2002 "New Year's Resolution" to maintain the practice of prohibiting ads for hard-liquor products.

We want you to know that your current position on this issue has widespread backing among the American public. According to a national opinion poll conducted between December 14 and 16 by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, Incorporated, an overwhelming majority (72%) of Americans support keeping network television free of hard-liquor ads. Most Americans (79%) think that allowing liquor ads on television will be a factor in causing young people under 21 to try liquor.

There are other strong reasons why a "New Year's Resolution" to avoid liquor advertising would serve both **(ABC's/CBS's/FOX's/WB's)** and the public interests. Too many influences already promote drinking by underage youth. Comprehensive research conducted at Michigan State University and the University of Missouri during the past five years confirms that hard-liquor ads on TV would significantly increase the pressures to drink on our nation's youth. That study found that two-thirds of the young adults and teenagers surveyed said TV liquor ads show them that drinking is romantic. Half the young respondents said that such ads teach them which brands taste best, how other people use alcohol, and which brands are most popular.

Underage drinking costs our country an estimated \$52 billion per year. According to the latest government data, nearly one-third of all 12- to 20-year-olds report using alcohol within the past month. Of those youth, nearly 20 percent binge drink. Young people are especially susceptible to harm associated with drinking. The age of first alcohol use strongly predicts future alcohol dependence. Those who start drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to become alcoholics than those who wait until they are 21. Adolescents who consume alcohol are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors, such as becoming sexually active at an earlier age and having unprotected sex (placing them at greater risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases). Alcohol use by young people also contributes to higher rates of clinical depression, academic problems, crime victimization, and sexual assault.

(ABC/CBS/FOX/WB) is doing the right thing for the nation's youth by refusing to accept liquor advertisements. We urge you to stand firm in this resolve, and we offer our appreciation and future support of this principled position.

Sincerely,

SAMPLE LETTER TO GE/NBC

Date

Robert C. Wright
Vice Chairman and Executive Officer, General Electric
Chairman and CEO, NBC
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10112
Fax: (212) 664-7288

Dear Mr. Wright:

I am dismayed by NBC's decision to start airing hard-liquor ads. I strongly urge you to reconsider your policy and order the reinstatement of the NBC's previously longstanding voluntary ban on hard liquor ads.

Too many influences already promote drinking by underage youth, and hard-liquor ads airing on NBC can only make that problem worse. Comprehensive research conducted at Michigan State University and the University of Missouri during the past five years confirms that hard-liquor ads on TV would significantly increase the pressures to drink on our nation's youth. That study found that 15- to 20-year-olds who had greater exposure to TV liquor advertising were more likely to have intentions to drink liquor when older, than those with lesser exposure to those ads. Half the young respondents said that such ads teach them which brands taste best, how other people use alcohol, and which brands are most popular.

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Thank you in advance for your support in keeping our youth alcohol free and reducing America's substance abuse problem.

Sincerely,

Name
Address
Telephone