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THE SENATE

STATE OF MICHIGAN

*"No money shall be paid out of
the state treasury except in pursuance
of appropriations made by law."*

*—Michigan Constitution
Article IX, Section 17*

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8/10/2005

ivir. vv iiiian ri. osier, Chief
Regulations and Procedures Division
Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau
ATTN: Notice No.41
P.O. Box 14412
Washington, DC 20044-4412
Dear Mr. Foster:

I am writing with regard to Notice No. 41, where the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) is seeking public comment on whether additional requirements should be added to current alcohol product labels. I oppose any efforts that would include "standard serving" information or an over-simplified listing of the amount of pure alcohol on labels or advertising. My concern relates to how the amount of pure alcohol in a product should be communicated. On the question of alcohol content, I believe you should continue the longstanding federal policy of using the percent alcohol by volume, or proof, as the only appropriate ways to describe alcohol content. I oppose proposals to display the alcohol content in terms of fluid ounces of pure alcohol per "standard serving." This would cover up the significant differences in strength, concentration and effect between hard liquor, wine and beer. Communicating alcohol content in this way would be misleading and potentially dangerous and would hinder, rather than promote, responsible drinking. I believe that continuing the longstanding measure of the percentage of alcohol by volume is in the best interests of consumers and the public.

In addition, TTB should recognize there is no such thing as a "standard serving" and this too should not be permitted on any alcohol labels or advertising. While "serving size" is fairly common for beer, it varies widely for hard liquor. Different measuring devices for hard liquor contain anywhere from 1 to 3 fluid ounces and mixed drinks are generally "free poured" so there is no legitimate standard. Also, I know of very few people who could define a 'standard serving' for ports, sherries, liqueurs, fortified wines, and other alcoholic beverages.

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Further, state law and regulation will be negatively impacted by an effort to allow absolute alcohol per standard serving information on a label. Labeling the percentage of alcohol is the proper policy. Thus, changes in this area could put companies at risk of violating state laws.

I would ask that you do not support this effort that will ill serve the public good and cause more public confusion, not less.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,




Shirley Johnson
State Senator
13^h District

SJ:km