



William J. Healy, II
State Representative, 52nd House District

Committees:

Criminal Justice
Financial Institutions, Real Estate and Securities
Retirement and Pensions subcommittee
Public Utilities

July 29, 2005

Chief John Manfreda, Regulations & Procedures Division
Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau
ATTN: Notice No. 41
P.O. Box 14412
Washington, DC 20044-4412

Dear Chief Manfreda:

Current federal alcohol beverage label regulations do not allow most beer, wine and distilled spirits companies to provide information about the nutritional value of their products. Consumers seek this information in order to make informed decisions on what to drink and how much to drink. TTB is to be commended for seeking public comment on this proposed change in regulations.

Food, soft drinks, OTC drugs, and even dietary supplements provide consumers with basic nutritional information on the label. Alcoholic beverages (with some minor exceptions) are the only major class of consumable goods that do not provide this type of information on the label. TTB should agree to allow labels to voluntarily list information such as serving size and servings per container, as well as alcohol percentage, calories, fats, carbohydrates, and proteins per serving.

An emphasis on the percentage of alcohol per serving would be a vital informational component for consumers to have.

The U.S. government's advice on moderate drinking, as provided in *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (USDA & HHS, 2005) reads:

The majority of American adults consume alcohol. Those who do so should drink alcoholic beverages in moderation. Moderation is defined as the consumption of up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. Twelve fluid ounces of regular beer, 5 fluid ounces of wine, or 1.5 fluid ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits count as one drink for purposes of explaining moderation. (p. 44)

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Allowing placement of information on alcohol per serving and servings per container on beer, wine and distilled spirits labels will help consumer to better understand the government's advice. In fact, given the wide variety of formulations, container sizes and alcohol concentrations in today's products, and the regulatory disparities as to what information may be placed on beer, wine and distilled spirits labels, some consumers might welcome more information about how particular products relate to the *Guideline*' advice.

Consumer Serving Facts will be more meaningful if TTB makes clear in this rulemaking what constitutes a "serving". This is the essential fact that will allow consumers to make more informed comparisons between products and better understand what is in a standard serving of any alcohol beverage.

The standard serving definition used in the *Dietary Guidelines* (12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of table wine and 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits) is one widely used by US government agencies, public health groups, consumer groups, and a majority of state driver's license manuals. It makes sense to use the same definition as the benchmark for labels.

I urge TTB to act expeditiously to promulgate a regulation that permits meaningful consumer-orientated Serving Facts on beer, wine and spirits labels. Meanwhile, I urge TTB to allow manufacturers to provide this kind of truthful, non-misleading information on labels while the rulemaking process proceeds.

Sincerely,

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William J. Healy II
State Representative