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Montgomery County

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Appropriations Committee

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Subcommittee on Public

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Joint Audit Committee

July 25, 2005

Chief, Regulations & Procedures Division

Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau

ATTN: Notice No. 41

P.O. Box 14412

Washington, D.C. 20044-4412

Dear Chief,

Thank you for looking at changes in the current federal alcohol beverage label regulations and for seeking public comment on the proposed changes in these regulations. Current regulations do not allow most beer, wine and distilled spirit companies to provide information about their products so that consumers can make informed choices about what to drink and how much to drink.

I believe providing basic consumer information is necessary so that consumers may make informed choices about what to drink and how much to drink. Caloric information per serving is important to anyone who is watching his or her diet. Alcohol per serving should be important to anyone trying to monitor his or her alcohol intake.

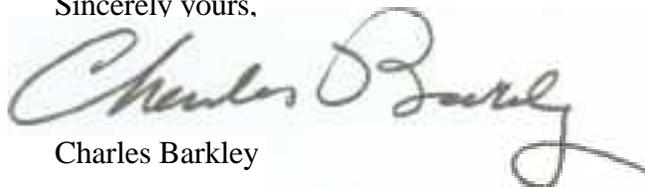
Most food packages, soft drink containers, over-the-counter drugs, and even dietary supplements provide consumers with basic information on the label. Alcohol beverages (with some exceptions) are the only major class of consumable goods that does not provide important information on the label, such as serving size, alcohol per serving, calories, fat and protein per serving, as well as allergens and ingredients. The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) should at least allow labels to voluntarily list such information. Of all of this information, the amount of alcohol per serving would be highly beneficial for consumers.

Consumer serving facts will be more meaningful if TTB makes clear in label regulations what constitutes a "standard 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 USDA & HHS, 2005, *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of table wine and 1.5 ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits) is one widely used by U.S. government agencies, public health groups, consumer groups, a majority of state driver license manuals. It makes sense to use the same definition as the benchmark for alcohol beverage labels.

I urge the TTB to act expeditiously to adopt a regulation that permits meaningful consumer-oriented 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.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Barkley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "C" and a long, sweeping tail on the "y".

Charles Barkley

CB/rw