Politics & Big Alcohol
Countering Industry Tactics in the U.S.

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Marin Institute Strategies

- Monitor and expose the alcohol industry’s harmful products, practices, and promotion

- Research and propose viable policy solutions to reduce alcohol-related harm

- Support communities, coalitions, and organizers in rejecting Big Alcohol’s damaging activities
Big Alcohol’s Tactics

- **Consolidate** into multinational conglomerates
- **Lobby** to undermine effective public policy
- **Target** vulnerable populations such as youth
- **Public relations** that blames parents, drinkers
- **Fund** alternative science, “responsibility” programs
- **Misdirect** with voluntary, self-regulation charade
The Biggest of Big Alcohol

- Parent companies HQ in Belgium & England
- 80% of the U.S. market
- 40% of global market

A-B InBev
- $395 million advertising 9 beers
- $3,460,000 - lobbying
- $373,500 - campaign donations

MillerCoors
- $315 million advertising 7 beers
- $1,367,000 - lobbying
- $426,930 - campaign donations
The Biggest of Big Alcohol

- HQ: England
- Top spirits producer
- $99 million - advertising
- $1.96 million - lobbying
The Biggest of Big Alcohol

- HQ: France
- Top spirits producer
- $42 million - advertising
- $1.2 million - lobbying
Lobbying Arms
Front Groups

Bacardi U.S.A.
Beam Global
Brown-Forman
Constellation Brands
DIAGEO
Hood River Distillers
Pernod Ricard
Sidney Frank Importing Co.

The Century Council

Distillers fighting drunk driving and underage drinking.

Anheuser-Busch InBev
Asahi Breweries
Bacardi-Martini
Beam Global
Brown-Forman
Diageo
Heineken
Molson Coors
Pernod Ricard
SABMiller

International Center for Alcohol Policies
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Targeted Marketing to Youth
Parents Cannot be Expected to Shoulder the Burden Alone

Other ways we help parents:
• Speed limits, speed bumps
• Child pornography laws
• Child labor laws
• Toy safety laws
• Food safety laws
Funding Educational Programs

Education alone has proven to be a dismal failure

“There is not a single public health crisis in the history of mankind that has been solved by handing out brochures.”

– Harold Goldstein, director,
California Center for Public Health Advocacy
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Why Big Alcohol Can’t Police Itself

A Review of Advertising Self-Regulation in the Distilled Spirits Industry

• Examined 7 DISCUS Code Reports 2004-2007
  • Complaints and decisions made by Review Board
  • Analyzed variables
  • Reasoning for the decisions
Results – Failure of Self-Regulation

- Worst “repeat offender” brands:
  - Skyy Vodka (8 complaints)
  - Svedka Vodka (6 complaints)

- Worst “repeat offender” companies:
  - Diageo (14 complaints)
  - Campari (11 complaints)
Results – Failure of Self-Regulation

- The most common complaints by far were about ads with sexual content
- 22 complaints alleged that ads overexposed youth
- Complaints by industry members 12.7 times more likely to be found in violation
Results – Failure of Self-Regulation

- 34% of complaints were from companies with DISCUS member on board
- Of these, 13% were in violation
- Complaints regarding ads from companies with a member on the review board were 3 times less likely to be found in violation
Barriers to Effective Self-Regulation

1) Little public awareness
2) No independent review
3) Subjective guidelines
4) No penalties or enforcement power
Realities About Self-Regulation

- Response by industry to regulatory threat
- Voluntary system of vague rules
- Defined and controlled by corporations
- Alternative to enforceable laws
Realities About Self-Regulation

“No one would seriously suggest that individuals should regulate themselves, that laws against murder, assault, and theft are unnecessary because people are socially responsible.”

Joel Bakan, The Corporation, 2003
What We Can Do

- Increase alcohol prices
- Stop youth-oriented products
- Restrict alcohol advertising
- Reject Big Alcohol funding and messages
- Call for an end to self-regulation
- Get politics out of policymaking
Increase Alcohol Prices

- One of the most effective prevention strategies
- Youth are especially sensitive to price
- Alcohol taxes can generate new revenue
- Lots of activity in states due to economy
Stop youth-oriented products

Alcoholic energy drinks - soon to be history?

Alcopops campaign - continues in states
Stop Youth-targeted Marketing

“Alcohol Promotion on Facebook”
Marin Institute article,
Journal of Global Drug Policy and Practice
(September 2009)
Restrict Alcohol Advertising

- Local level, on government property
- Rulemaking on product placement
- Self-regulation?
What We Can Do – Expose Lobbying

Marin Institute Reports

• Big Beer Duopoly
• You Get What You Pay For
• Alcohol Fuels Presidential Campaign
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