

Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention

Know When to Say When

Recommended Criteria in Deciding to Introduce, Co-Sponsor, Hear or Otherwise Support Alcohol Promotion Legislation

We are deeply concerned with the annual package of legislation promoting the use of alcohol. While none of these bills may appear that damaging when examined individually, the harm is apparent when you consider the *cumulative* impact of so many bills that have been enacted year after year along these lines; or what has been openly referred to during floor debates as “alcohol creep.”

We therefore ask legislators to evaluate such proposals regarding alcohol before deciding whether to sponsor, co-sponsor, hear or otherwise support such measures:

1. Does the proposal further “normalize” the use of alcohol in everyday, atypical situations?

Research has established that community norms have a major impact on youth behavior. Much of the substance abuse prevention efforts are aimed at providing and encouraging fun youth activities that don’t involve the use of alcohol, demonstrating people can have fun without using alcohol or other drugs.

Unfortunately, legislation that now promotes the public consumption of alcohol in such places as grocery stores, farmers markets, day spas, wedding boutiques and movie theatres sets a contrary community norm for our young people. Further expansion like this needs to be stopped.

2. Does the proposal further diminish what ought to be a clear line between drinking and driving?

The law enforcement, public safety message is “don’t drink and drive.” Legislation such as that noted above sends a message that “it is okay to drink a little bit and drive,” since in most instances people will be driving after consuming the alcohol in question.

The danger in these mixed messages is that even adults have a hard time trying to make such distinctions. This is evidenced by the number of DUI and vehicular homicide crimes. Giving this message to our youth is even worse.

3. Does this proposal needlessly interfere with people who are trying to recover from alcoholism?

People in recovery have zero tolerance for alcohol. A critical method for recovery is “structure,” or simply staying away from alcohol and the enticement to resume use.

Unfortunately, recent legislation now permits people in recovery from alcohol addiction to be offered alcoholic drinks while grocery shopping, going to the movies, visiting convenience stores (where the smell of alcohol is now available via growler refilling), and visiting farmers markets.

4. Will enactment of the proposal open the door to future expansion of more alcohol availability?

Let's keep in mind that alcohol promotion legislation is ever-expanding, so allowing one form of expansion inevitably leads to the proposal of others. Sampling in grocery stores thus lead to sampling in farmers markets, for instance.

Please watch for and discourage future legislation or proposals to expand sampling.

5. Will enactment of the proposal further burden the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board?

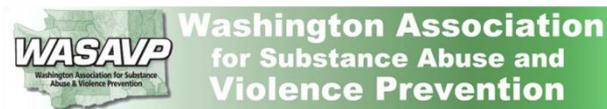
The WSLCB now must regulate and enforce the growing quantities of alcohol legislation enacted every session as well as marijuana legislation. Regulation and enforcement are at the "fatigue" point.

6. Who will pay the bills that come with ever-increasing alcohol access and promotion for overall societal costs (police, medical, first responders, treatment, detox, etc.) associated with alcohol abuse?

And the related question is whether the alcohol industry actually suffers from a lack of advertising, promotion and product availability that really makes this legislation necessary.

Thank you for your consideration of these general points and we will be conveying separately any particular positions we may have on specific proposals as they are introduced.

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Washington Association for Substance Abuse & Violence Prevention



Columbian: [Excessive drinking costs U.S. \\$2 per drink From 2015-anything newer?](#)

CDC: [Societal costs of alcohol](#)

[Scientific Study: No Safe Level of Alcohol](#)

“The health risks associated with alcohol are massive,” said Dr. Emmanuela Gakidou of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington and the senior author of the study. *“Our findings are consistent with other recent research, which found clear and convincing correlations between drinking and premature death, cancer, and cardiovascular problems. Zero alcohol consumption minimizes the overall risk of health loss.”*