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WISCONSIN PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL

Assure safe and healthy people by monitoring progress on the state health plan, Healthiest Wisconsin 2010, and on the readiness for public health emergencies.

PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

October 9, 2009

In the interests of meeting the goals of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010*, the state health plan, for addressing alcohol and other substance abuse and addiction, the Wisconsin Public Health Council submits the following resolution to the Governor of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Legislature:

Whereas, Wisconsin has a longstanding history of high national rankings in such indicators as alcohol consumption, binge drinking and heavy drinking among U.S. states (all first in the nation in 2006); and

Whereas, about 42,800 Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) arrests, and 8,300 crashes resulting in 5,700 injuries and 300 deaths, occur in Wisconsin annually that are linked to alcohol; and

Whereas, the citizens of Wisconsin incurred \$935 million in costs related to alcohol-related accidents and medical conditions in 2007; and

Whereas, about 457,000 adults and adolescents, or about 10 percent of the population, need services for alcohol or substance abuse each year; and

Whereas, alcohol abuse is a major contributor to criminal activity and to county jail and state prison incarcerations and court costs in the state; and

Whereas, the state's beer tax of \$2 per barrel -- less than a penny per regular bottle of beer -- is the third lowest state beer tax in the nation, and has not risen since 1969; and

Whereas, numerous Wisconsin news media have embarked on campaigns strongly calling for increased efforts to address these problems, through increased prevention, law enforcement, and treatment options; and

Whereas, the Public Health Council recognized the need to act on alcohol risk education issues in 2008, and joined the statewide All-Wisconsin Alcohol Risk Education (AWARE) coalition to address this major population health risk by changing legislative policy; and

Whereas, the Public Health Council recognizes the importance of a tax on beer as a step in reducing alcohol related injuries and disease in Wisconsin. The Council supported this important public health strategy in its report: Increased State Financing of Governmental Public Health (December 7, 2007) (<http://publichealthcouncil.dhs.wi.gov/financeproposal.pdf>); and

Whereas, a legislative hearing on 2009 Assembly Bill 287, a proposal to raise the state beer tax, will be held in Madison October 13.

Now, be it resolved that Wisconsin should raise its beer tax as proposed in 2009 Assembly Bill 287; with the tax proceeds being earmarked for law enforcement grants and alcohol and drug abuse and treatment and prevention programs.