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Joint Committee on Welfare Reform  
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**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991**

*July 19, 2005*

VIA FACSIMILE (202) 927-8525

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

RE: Advance notice of proposed rulemaking — Labeling and Advertising of Wines,  
Distilled Spirits and Malt Beverages; Request for Public Comment (*70 Fed.*  
*Reg. 22,274-83 (April 29, 2005)*)

Dear Chief:

As a Maryland State Senator who has an interest in ensuring Maryland consumers have more information about the food and beverages they consume, and a former Congressional staffer who is familiar with labeling efforts on foods resulting from the Nutritional Labeling and Education Act of 1990, I commend Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau ("TTB") for seeking public comment concerning such labeling for beer, wine and distilled spirits. I continue to be a strong proponent of empowering consumers with such information.

As you know, current federal alcohol beverage label regulations do not allow most beer, wine and distilled spirits companies to provide information about their products so that consumers can make informed choices about what to drink and how much to drink. Since Maryland cannot require such labeling, I respectfully urge TTB to promulgate regulations permitting meaningful consumer-oriented "Serving Facts" on beer, wine and distilled spirits labels and to permit manufacturers to provide this kind of truthful, non-misleading information on their products while the rulemaking process proceeds.

Already, food, soft drinks, over-the-counter drugs, and even dietary supplements provide consumers with basic consumer information on the label. Alcohol beverages (with some exceptions) are the only major class of consumable goods that do not provide this type of information on the label. TTB should allow labels voluntarily to list information such as serving size and servings per container, as well as alcohol, calories, fat, carbohydrates and protein per

serving. Of all this information, the amount of alcohol per serving would be highly beneficial 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)

Allowing placement of information on alcohol per serving and servings per container on beer, wine and distilled spirits labels will help consumers 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 *Guidelines'* 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 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, 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-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 in advance for consideration of my comments to your advance proposed rulemaking. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,



Rob Garagla  
Maryland State Senator