

# United States Senate

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## DEWINE, DODD INTRODUCE BILL TO PREVENT UNDERAGE DRINKING

U.S. Senators Mike DeWine (R-OH) and Chris Dodd (D-CT) today introduced the Sober Truth on Preventing (STOP) Underage Drinking Act designed to prevent the spread of underage drinking. The bill would coordinate efforts at the federal level, authorize a national adult-oriented media campaign against underage drinking, provide grants to prevention programs, and increase research and data collection on underage drinking.

"Children in America have ready access to alcohol and it is extremely troubling," said Senator DeWine. "Alcohol plays a major role in the leading causes of death in our youth and it may have an adverse effect on brain development. We must educate our children, as well as adults, on the potential dangers of underage alcohol consumption."

"The road to adulthood isn't an easy one, but when it comes to alcohol and children, it's a dead-end street," said Dodd. "This measure will - for the first time - help lead a national effort to combat underage drinking."

The bill has four major areas of underage drinking policy development. The first would provide \$2 million to create an Interagency Coordinating Committee to coordinate the efforts and expertise of various federal agencies to combat underage drinking. It would also mandate an annual report to Congress from the Committee on their efforts to prevent underage drinking and require an annual report card from the Department of Health and Human Services on efforts at the state level to combat underage drinking.

Given that most children and underage youth who drink obtain the alcohol from their parents or another adult, the bill would also authorize a national media campaign directed at adults. According to the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, for every one advertisement the alcohol industry runs to discourage underage alcohol use, 609 advertisements are run promoting alcohol use. The Ad Council received \$800,000 last year to begin this campaign and this legislation would authorize \$1 million.

The third section would provide \$5 million in enhancement grants to the Drug Free Communities program to be directed at the problem of underage drinking. A new program would be created to provide competitive grants to states, non-profits, and institutions of higher education to create statewide coalitions to prevent underage drinking and alcohol abuse by university students, which would also be funded at \$5 million annually.

Finally, the bill would provide \$6 million to increase research and data collection at the federal level on underage drinking conducted. This information would include the types and brands of alcohol that kids use and the short- and long-term impact of underage drinking upon adolescent brain development.

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