

Interagency Coordinating Committee  
on the Prevention of Underage Drinking

April 13, 2004

Washington, D.C.

My name is Shawn Walker and I represent the National Liquor Law Enforcement Association (NLLEA) as a member of the Board of Directors. I would like to begin by expressing our appreciation for being invited to participate in this important meeting and to share the position of the NLLEA regarding the Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility report.

While it is clear that much of this report is pertinent to our membership, I will focus on section nine regarding access to alcohol by underage persons. The subject of access is directly related to the mission of the vast majority of NLLEA members and is a constant in the realm of liquor law enforcement. There is not a specific recommendation in this section of the report that we do not support – in fact many of the recommendations are currently being accomplished at varying levels in many of the states and Canadian provinces that the NLLEA represents.

While many states have achieved great success with programs outlined in the report, such as compliance checks, one area continues to be a primary concern to all – that is the access to alcohol through “non-commercial” sources or, more specifically, through third party transactions. It is well known throughout state liquor control agencies that the of age provider of alcohol to underage persons is the most difficult offender to interdict as many of these transactions are done outside of the view of law enforcement or licensed businesses. These types of offenses are very difficult to target enforcement operations toward. Some programs such as shoulder tap operations, although innovative, are difficult to implement in many jurisdictions. The recommendations contained in the report are valuable but in reality, there needs to be more done in this area – perhaps a formal review of best practices widely disseminated to law enforcement as a type of guide.

Finally, one prevailing thought came to mind as I prepared these remarks and reviewed the report. Liquor law enforcement agencies around the country are facing drastic budgetary reductions – one of our member agencies was abolished in July 2003 - at a time when we cannot afford to reduce our efforts in enforcing the underage drinking laws. While difficult as this may seem, it is crucial that we at the NLLEA support this report and the recommendations contained within it and we will continue to address the access to alcohol by underage persons in our respective states.

Again, thank you for this opportunity and I will gladly take any of your questions.