

OMAHA COALITION MEETING
Wednesday, May 8, 2024
9 a.m.

Please use to sign-in:



AGENDA

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Review of the April 10, 2024 Meeting Minutes
(please contact PEM staff with corrections)
- III. Nebraska's Statewide Community Health Assessment
Zack Hicks, Division of Behavioral Health with DHHS
- IV. Focus Area Updates
 - a. Policy
 - i. NU Board of Regents
 - ii. Dietary Guidelines
 - iii. LR 353 – Alcohol pricing and taxation study
 - b. Youth
 - i. Youth Leadership Network update
 - ii. Youth Leadership Retreat – June 25-27, 2024
 - c. Awareness
 - i. May Research Summary available at www.projectextramile.org
- V. Additional Discussion/Announcements
- VI. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date: **June 12th, 9 a.m., Alicia Sparks with the U.S. Alcohol Policy Alliance**
UNO's Community Engagement Center, Room 201

IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

Alcohol Policy Conference 20 in Arlington, VA – May 14-16
Nebraska Liquor Control Commission Hearings – June 4
Youth Leadership Retreat – June 25-27

PROJECT EXTRA MILE

OMAHA METRO AREA COALITION MEETING MINUTES

April 10, 2024

- I. Call to Order: Tom Safranek called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.
- II. Welcome and Introductions: Coalition members and speakers in attendance: Derek Schwartz, Tom Safranek, Carey Pomykata, Jim Timm, Jona Beck, Molly Rezich, Matt Kelly, Jordan McCullogh, and Palistene Gray-Moore. Coalition members in attendance via Zoom: Ashley Pick, Brian Ortner, and Maggie Ballard. Staff members: Chris Wagner, Jenna Abbott, Beatha Kliewer, and Liene Topko.
- III. Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the March 13th meeting were included in the coalition meeting packet. No additions or corrections were made.
 - a. Preview of Project Extra Mile's Community-Based Trainings: Chris Wagner introduced PEM's five ACTION Guides (Advocacy 101; Civics 101; Excessive Alcohol Consumption; Liquor Licensing; Underage Drinking) and shared that their purpose is to increase knowledge and capacity of individuals/ neighborhood associations/faith-based organizations, and others to advocate for increased health and safety in communities. PEM is offering trainings that are based on these guides. Liene Topko and Chris provided brief previews of three of the ACTION Guides: Excessive Alcohol Consumption, Liquor Licensing, and Advocacy 101.
- IV. Focus Area Updates
 - a. Local
 - i. Liene Topko shared that the Throwback Arcade Lounge was before the Liquor Control Commission in April. They talked about their rebranding and requested modifications of the restrictions placed on the license. The LCC decided to permit expanding their closing time to 1:30 am, instead of 1:00 am, and allowing the use of a professionally licensed event promoter, after June 10th.
 - b. Policy
 - i. Topko provided an update regarding the 2024 legislative session:
 1. LB1204, the bill defining and permitting rickhouses, was signed into law on April 2nd.
 2. LB836, the co-branded product bill, was amended into LB685 and was placed on final reading on March 13th.
 3. LB875, the bill prohibiting retailers from selling products below wholesale price, was advanced to general file on February 27th and is unlikely to be adopted this year.
 4. LB974, harmonizes penalties for a motor vehicle homicide of an unborn child as a result of impaired driving, was placed on general file on March 18th and is unlikely to be adopted this year, despite two attempts to amend into other bills.

- c. Enforcement
 - i. Chris Wagner shared that the Douglas County DUI Task Force was out on March 15-16 looking for impaired drivers. The operations resulted in 44 citations & 23 arrests including eight DUI arrests.
 - ii. PEM coordinated compliance checks in Blair and Cass County resulting in 4 (11%) of 38 businesses selling to the minors.
- d. Youth
 - i. Jenna Abbott shared that six youth traveled to Lincoln for Youth Leadership Day to educate senators about the harms they see in their communities and advocate for a study to look at the price of alcohol.
 - ii. Senator John Lowe (Kearney) introduced LR353 to examine alcohol pricing in the state as a result of their advocacy.
- e. Awareness
 - i. The April Research Summaries are available at www.projectextramile.org/ResearchSummary

V. Additional Discussion/Announcements: none

VI. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date: The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Why Increasing Alcohol Taxes Makes Sense

Reducing Underage Drinking, High-risk Drinking and Related Harms

A review of 72 studies and reports published in the Journal of Preventive Medicine found strong evidence that raising alcohol taxes is an effective strategy for reducing excessive alcohol consumption and related harms. The authors noted that “increased alcohol taxes are associated with decreased overall consumption, decreased youth consumption, decreased youth binge drinking, reduced alcohol-related motor-vehicle crashes, reduced mortality from liver cirrhosis, and reduced violence.”¹

Why is an Increased Tax on Alcohol Needed?

- The economic and social costs of drinking far exceed alcohol tax revenues. Underage drinking alone cost the citizens of Nebraska \$324 million in 2013. These costs include medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youth.²
- A CDC study reports that, in 2010, Nebraska’s costs due to excessive alcohol consumption were \$1.16 billion, \$491 million of which was paid for by the government.³ In contrast, the state only took in \$27.6 million in taxes that year, or a mere 5.6% of its cost.
- More than 178,000 deaths are caused by excessive alcohol use each year,⁴ making it the fourth leading cause of preventable death in the United States⁵. Excessive alcohol use is also a risk factor for many health and societal problems.⁶
- Revenues from increased alcohol taxes can be designated to fund alcohol prevention programs, increased enforcement of alcohol laws (i.e. high-profile sobriety checkpoints), treatment for alcohol-related disorders, or education.
- 43% of Nebraskans surveyed support or strongly support additional taxes.⁷ Furthermore, in a national survey, nearly 81 percent of adults favor an increase of five cents per drink in the tax on beer, wine, or liquor to pay for programs to prevent minors from drinking and to increase alcohol treatment programs.⁸
- 20% of drinkers consume over 85% of all alcoholic beverages.⁹ This means the remaining 80% of drinkers consume, on average, relatively small quantities of alcohol and pay a minimal amount of taxes. Alcohol tax increases impact excessive drinkers more and these drinkers are the ones who are causing all the socio-economic costs in our communities.
- Now a fraction of what they were decades ago, federal alcohol excise tax rates in the United States have fallen off dramatically. Adjusted for inflation, the federal excise tax on a six-pack of beer since 1950 has dropped from \$1.33 to 33 cents, making beer far cheaper today, relative to other consumer products, than it was twenty and thirty years ago, according to the Center for Public Interest.¹⁰
- The latest CDC Prevention Status Report indicates that Nebraska ranks among the worst states in terms of alcohol excise tax rates.

¹ Elder et al. (2010)

² PIRE (2015)

³ Sacks et al. (2015)

⁴ CDC ARDI (2024)

⁵ NIAAA (2023)

⁶ The Community Guide (n.d.)

⁷ NASIS (2020)

⁸ Harwood, Wagenaar, & Bernat (2002)

⁹ Greenfield & Rogers (1999)

¹⁰ Center for Science in the Public Interest (2007)

- Nebraska’s excise tax for beer is \$0.31/gallon; the Community Preventive Task Force (Task Force) recommends the tax to be at or above \$1 per gallon.
- Nebraska’s excise tax for wine is \$0.95/gallon; the Task Force recommends the tax to be at or above \$2 per gallon.
- Nebraska’s excise tax for distilled spirits is \$3.75/gallon; the Task Force recommends the tax to be at or above \$8 per gallon¹¹.

Alcohol Tax Increases Work

- **Studies show that increased alcohol taxes are effective.** Higher excise taxes on alcohol are often passed on to consumers, which leads to a reduction in the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption among youth¹², who are more price-sensitive consumers. Higher alcohol prices or taxes have been consistently related to fewer motor vehicle crashes and fatalities, less alcohol-impaired driving, less mortality from liver cirrhosis, less violence, lower incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and less alcohol-related dependence.¹³ Six studies from the systematic reviews conducted by the Task Force found consistent evidence that higher alcohol prices were associated with less youth drinking. On average, a 10 percent increase in the price of alcohol reduced beer, wine and spirit consumption by 5 percent, 6 percent, and nearly 8 percent respectively with alcohol-related crashes and other problems falling by like levels. Smaller increases produce proportional results.¹⁴
- **How do increased taxes on alcohol prevent underage drinking?** Although alcohol excise taxes are often raised for revenue-generating reasons, several studies suggest that higher excise taxes also have an impact on youth consumption and its consequences. Young adults are more responsive to price increases than adults. Higher taxes on alcohol are associated with less drinking among 16- to 21-year olds and specifically amongst high school students.¹⁵
- **Excise taxes naturally lose effectiveness over time.** Alcohol taxes are implemented at the federal and state level and are beverage specific (i.e. differing for beer, wine and spirits). Excise taxes are based on volume, unlike sales taxes which are based on the sales price. When taxes are based on volume, and not adjusted regularly, their effects are quickly reduced through inflation.

The Nebraska Experience

While a number of high-profile drunken driving crashes has seen Nebraska state senators examining a variety of approaches to cracking down on the problem, no bill to address alcohol taxes has made it to the floor for debate in recent legislative sessions.

- Nebraska ranks as the seventh-worst state in terms of binge drinking with 19.3% of adults binge drinking.¹⁶
- Nebraska ranks second-worst in terms of self-reported drinking and driving with 955 episodes per 1,000 population.¹⁷ Between 2010 and 2020, the Nebraska Highway Safety Office reports 704 people were killed in an alcohol-involved crash in Nebraska due to a drunk driver.¹⁸
- While traffic fatalities are a great concern, they are only a fraction of the total alcohol-attributable deaths Nebraska experiences. Between 2020 and 2021, Nebraska averaged 1,001 alcohol-attributable deaths per year and more than 21,000 years of potential life lost.¹⁹ In 2014, an estimated 2,403 hospitalizations occurred.²⁰
- Mirroring the decline of the federal rate due to inflation, Nebraska's inflation-adjusted excise tax on a six-pack has dropped from 32 cents to 17 cents since 1970.²¹

¹¹ CDC (2016)

¹² Coate & Grossman (1988)

¹³ Center for Science in the Public Interest (2007)

¹⁴ The Community Guide (2007)

¹⁵ The Community Guide (2007)

¹⁶ CDC BRFSS (2022)

¹⁷ Jewett et al. (2015)

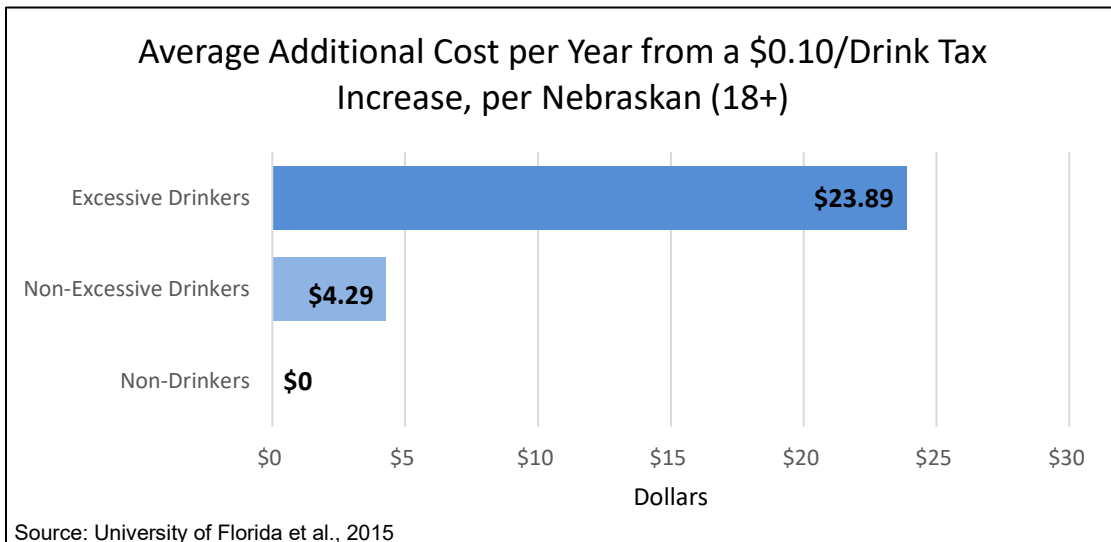
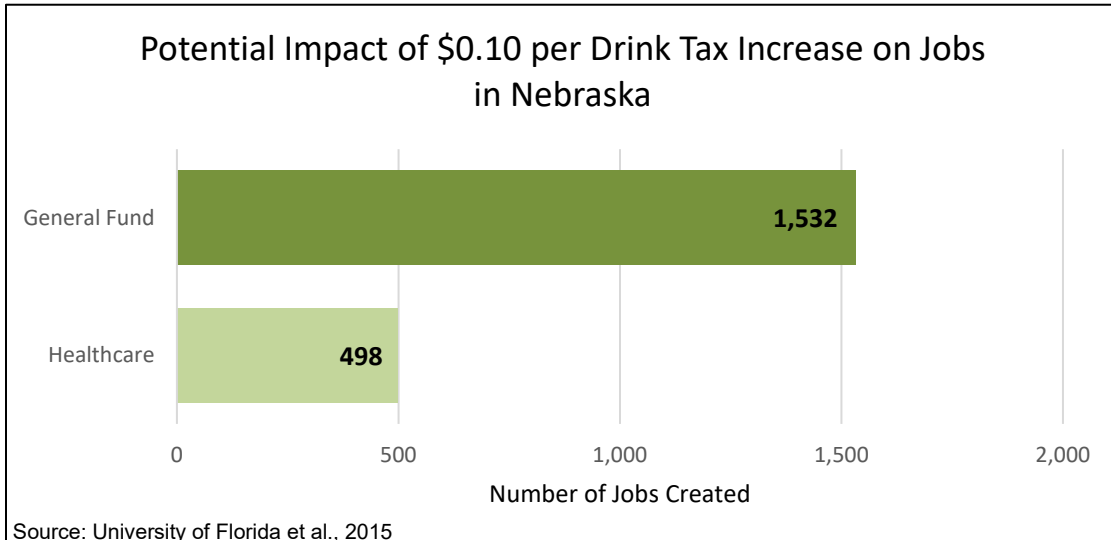
¹⁸ NDOT-HSO (2021)

¹⁹ CDC ARDI (2024)

²⁰ Nebraska Epidemiological Profile (2017)

²¹ Cordes (2011)

- Nebraska has increased its alcohol taxes just 14 times in the past 80 years with only six of those increases applying across the board, meaning that the tax rate on each type of alcohol was increased at the same time. Rates have not been raised across the board since 1985.²²
- If a \$0.10 per drink excise tax increase were to be imposed on alcohol in Nebraska, the state could create an estimated 2,030 new jobs. Furthermore, excessive drinkers would be most impacted by the tax increase, paying over five times more on average than non-excessive drinkers per year.²³



- A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analysis of 23 separate sobriety checkpoints in 2002 found the strategy reduced alcohol-related deaths and injuries by an average of 20 percent.²⁴ In Nebraska, this would save 15 lives every year.²⁵ Such increased enforcement could be funded with revenue from increased alcohol taxes.

²² Nebraska Legislature (n.d.)

²³ University of Florida et al. (2015)

²⁴ Elder et al. (2002)

²⁵ Nebraska Department of Roads (2014)

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REGISTER NOW

DEADLINE IS JUNE 12, 2024

Registration is available on the Project Extra Mile website.

www.projectextramile.org

If you have any questions please reach out to us.

Phone 402-963-9047

E-mail info@projectextramile.org



Nigel has developed and delivered unique, customized prevention trainings to youth across the U.S. since 1999. Nigel works with groups of young people and their allies to influence policy, advocate for social change, build leadership skills, and summon the courage to act consciously from their core principles. He works with grassroots prevention coalitions around the U.S. as they develop strategic plans for supporting and engaging youth. He has taught courses in psychopharmacology, media studies, substance abuse prevention, and community organizing at the University of Oregon and Portland Community College.



NIGEL WRANGHAM

Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor
Level II and Certified Prevention
Specialist



2024

Project Extra Mile's

YOUTH LEADERSHIP RETREAT

June 25-27, 2024

Lutheran Church of the Master

1200 N 181st Ct.

Omaha, NE 68022

DISCOVER your role in preventing underage drinking in a fun and interactive way.

IDENTIFY local issues facing young people and develop the skills to advocate for change.

LEARN how advertising and media play influence underage alcohol use and find ways we can spread our message.



OVERVIEW

Do you want to share your ideas about making positive changes in our community?

Join us and learn how to collect and analyze community data, develop recommendations and engage policy makers.

- **Check in will be at 6:00 pm on June 25th.**
- **Training will be all day on the 26th and conclude at noon on the 27th.**
- **Each day the students will be involved in interactive training sessions and fun exercises.**

● **Apply Today:**

Space is limited to 20 participants, so register early. You will not want to miss this opportunity!

● **Who Can Attend:**

Students entering 8th-12th grades.

● **Cost:**

All Students: \$75

Includes 2 nights lodging, meals, and t-shirt. Scholarship to attend are available by contacting Project Extra Mile.

REGISTRATION IS DUE JUNE 12, 2024



RESEARCH SUMMARY
Date Compiled: May 2024

Key takeaways from included research:

- Researchers examined the impact of alcohol advertisements related to breast cancer awareness or charities on attitudes and beliefs. The study involved US adults viewing pinkwashed ads for beer, wine, and liquor. They found that breast cancer risk perceptions and intentions to purchase the products did not differ by ad type. However, when participants were informed about the link between alcohol and breast cancer, participants reported the ads to be more misleading and expressed greater support for requiring breast cancer warnings on products.
- A report was recently released examining whether the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with increased rates of high-acuity alcohol-related complications, instances when chronic alcohol-related diseases suddenly worsened requiring immediate medical attention. Researchers found that rates of high-acuity alcohol-related complications were statistically higher than expected in the 4-18 months of the pandemic after March 2020, especially among women aged 40-64 who experienced a 33.3-56.0% increase in complications.
- An Australian research team wanted to examine the concerns that zero-alcohol products may encourage adolescents' earlier interest in alcoholic products and increase their exposure to alcohol company branding and how this poses a challenge for parents. They found that parents reported conflicting and cautious views on these products. The parents expressed that zero-alcohol beverages support reduced adult drinking but were mainly unnecessary for adolescents and that these products could normalize alcohol consumption.
- A new study examined to what extent recent age and gender trends in binge drinking vary by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) identity. Researchers found that at the beginning of the study, LGBTQ+ women endorsed binge drinking at higher rates than their cisgender, heterosexual peers. Disparities in LGBTQ+ women's drinking diminished over the study period among midlife aged women due to increases in binge drinking among cisgender, heterosexual women. No evidence of disparities was seen among the men.
- A study was conducted in Australia to examine the proportion of drinking occasions and total alcohol consumed that takes place at off-premise locations. Researchers compared results in Australia, New Zealand, England, and Scotland and found that overall, a majority of drinking occasions among high-risk drinkers occurred at off-premise location in all four countries: 80.1% Australia, 72.0% New Zealand, 61.7% England, and 60.7% Scotland. They also determined that both high- and low-risk drinkers consumed significantly larger quantities of alcohol per occasion at off-premise compared to on-premise locations.

'Could not stand': Pottawattamie County supervisor arrested for OWI

Written by Bill Schammert

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa —A Pottawattamie County supervisor said he didn't realize he had too much to drink when he was arrested for operating while intoxicated.

In a phone interview with KETV, Jeff Jorgensen said he was having a tough time mourning the loss of his wife, who died in May 2023, and he was self-medicating.

"I'm a human being and I have faults," he said. "This is not what I wanted to see happen and I'm going to do whatever I have to to rectify what happened in this situation. I don't want to see it happen again."

According to a police report, Jorgensen hit a vehicle on westbound I-80 in Council Bluffs and was pulled over on the shoulder. When he got out, according to the report, he fell into the interstate.

The Iowa State trooper who arrested Jorgensen said he smelled of alcohol and "could not stand" without losing his balance. A breath test showed his blood alcohol level to be 0.168, or more than twice the legal limit.

"You don't realize where's the point where I need to stop or I can't drive anymore," he said.

Jorgensen, who was attending a Republican event in Fort Dodge, Iowa on Saturday, said he stopped at a few different spots on the way home to Council Bluffs to have a drink.

"I was dealing with a memory, and the alcohol for the weekend was self-medication," he said. "It helped me to put my wife's passing on the back burner and let me enjoy a little getaway for a few days."

Jorgensen calls himself a social drinker. He told KETV he was extremely remorseful and will seek grief counseling and alcohol treatment.

"I am truly sorry," he said. "The drunk driving charge — it's the first time I've ever been charged and I'm almost 70 years old."

He was charged in Pottawattamie County Court with first offense operating while intoxicated and released from jail on Monday.

Jorgensen was elected to serve until December 2026.

The Pottawattamie Democratic Party called for the immediate resignation of Jorgensen.

"Jorgensen undermined the trust and confidence of Pottawattamie County citizens with his continued poor choices," Lisa Lima, chair of the Pottawattamie Democratic Party said. Lima also urged local leaders and residents to join the cause.

KETV NewsWatch 7 reached out to the Pottawattamie County Republican Party but has not received comment.

The Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors meets next on April 9.

The county released a statement that it was aware of the incident but would not comment further.

Lincoln bar where man was fatally shot had dozens of police service calls in last 11 months

Written by Andrew Ozaki

LINCOLN, Neb. —Security issues, crowd control and now, a deadly shooting.

KETV Investigates has learned police responded to the Royal Hookah Bar and Lounge dozens of times in the past year.

Early Sunday morning, 32-year-old Gregory Little Jr. was shot and killed by a 24-year-old security guard hired by the bar following a disturbance over people cutting in line at the entrance.

Police records show officers made 28 calls to the downtown bar over the past 11 months, including 11 disturbances, four alcohol issues, two for robbery, one sex crime and now Little's shooting.

Investigators said security guards were responding to fights breaking out over patrons cutting in line.

Police said Little or someone he was with took away a security guard's baton.

"The security team attempted to get the ASP baton back. At that point in time, one member of the security team 24 years of age discharged his firearm at Mr. Little," Lincoln police Capt. Jason Stille said.

Police said Little was hit in the arm and twice in the chest.

Little's sister, Keylna Taylor, was with him at the time.

She told KETV Investigates that her brother was not armed and was picking up his phone when he was shot.

"He didn't have to shoot my brother at all. You could literally just pulled out your gun, and we would have just ran away," Taylor said.

KETV Investigates discovered that the hookah bar has been under scrutiny from state regulators for several months due to a disturbance in October involving after-hours crowd control and security.

The bar stays open after it quits serving alcohol at 2 a.m. and operates as a cigar bar.

In January, the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission placed the bar on a restricted license with a condition that there could be no business-related violations for a year and no food truck products could be brought into the business.

State regulators will not comment on the shooting but said they will wait for the police report to see if additional action will be taken on the lounge's license.

KETV Investigates talked to Jamil Khoudeida, the president and manager of the business.

He said he has not opened since the shooting and doesn't know when he will again, out of respect for Little's family.

He would not comment further or say what Omaha firm he hired to provide security.

As of Tuesday, Lincoln police had not made any arrests.

At a vigil Monday evening, Little's family demanded answers.

"We want justice, we want justice," Taylor said.

Should Alcoholic Beverages Have Cancer Warning Labels?

Written by Ted Alcorn

Fifteen words are roiling the global alcohol industry.

Beginning in 2026, containers of beer, wine and liquor sold in Ireland will be required by law to bear a label in red capital letters with two warnings: “THERE IS A DIRECT LINK BETWEEN ALCOHOL AND FATAL CANCERS” and “DRINKING ALCOHOL CAUSES LIVER DISEASE.”

The requirement, signed into law last year, is backed by decades of scientific research and goes much further than any country has thus far communicated the health risks of alcohol consumption. It has sparked fierce opposition from alcohol businesses worldwide, but it is also inspiring a push in some other countries to pursue similar measures.

“It’s an important step,” said Dr. Timothy Naimi, the director of the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research at the University of Victoria. “People who drink should have the right to know basic information about alcohol, just as they do for other food and beverage products.”

In Thailand, the government is in the final stages of drafting a regulation requiring alcohol products to carry graphic images accompanied by text warnings such as “alcoholic beverages can cause cancer,” according to The Bangkok Post.

A bill has been introduced in the Canadian Parliament that would require labels on all alcoholic beverages to communicate a “direct causal link between alcohol consumption and the development of fatal cancers.”

Last week, the Alaska State Legislature held a committee hearing on a bill that would require businesses selling alcohol to post signs carrying a cancer warning.

Norway, which already heavily regulates the sale of alcohol, is developing proposals for introducing cancer warning labels. The country’s state secretary, Ole Henrik Krat Bjorkholt, who followed Ireland’s effort with great interest, said in an interview, “I think it’s probable that we will implement something similar.”

Ireland has been a trailblazer in setting aggressive public health policies before. In 2004, it became the first country to ban smoking in indoor workplaces, including bars and restaurants, a policy since adopted in over 70 countries. The warning label requirement for alcohol could be the start of a similar change in how beverages are packaged, and a vehicle for raising awareness about the dangers of drinking, however small the amount.

A long fight

The evidence linking drinking and cancer is well established. In 1988, the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer concluded that alcohol is carcinogenic to humans. Research in the decades since has only strengthened the conclusion, including for breast, liver, colorectal and esophageal cancers. In November, the W.H.O. and the I.A.R.C. declared in a joint statement: “No safe amount of alcohol consumption for cancers can be established.”

Despite this, the connection between alcohol and cancer isn't well known. In the United States, a recent nationwide survey found that about one in three Americans was aware that drinking increased the risk of cancer.

Globally, only a quarter of countries require any kind of health warning on alcohol, according to a recent study, and the mandated language is generally imprecise. The United States last altered its warning labels in 1989, when it introduced language that discouraged drinking during pregnancy, or before driving or operating heavy machinery, and that vaguely acknowledged that alcohol "may cause health problems."

It took over a decade for Ireland's labeling requirement to become a reality, according to Sheila Gilheany, chief executive of the advocacy organization Alcohol Action Ireland, who described it as "the most contested piece of legislation in Irish history." She said that the effort began in 2012, when a steering group assigned to address the country's high rate of alcohol-related deaths recommended a raft of measures, including warning labels.

Many of the recommendations were watered down by the time they became law in 2018, but the labeling requirement made it through unscathed. It took another four years for lawmakers to hammer out the specific wording and the design that would be required.

As those details were decided, alcohol companies stepped up their protests. In late 2022, a group of major alcohol-exporting European countries submitted formal objections to the European Commission, the European Union's executive branch, arguing that Ireland's labels impeded free trade and were not appropriate or proportionate to the objective of reducing alcohol's harms.

When the commission raised no objection, Antonio Tajani, Italy's foreign minister, called the Irish proposal "an attack on the Mediterranean diet." The language in the labels "doesn't take into account the difference between moderate consumption and alcohol abuse," he said on Twitter.

Coordinated industry opposition

Alcohol businesses are fighting on multiple fronts to keep the Irish labeling requirement from taking effect. At committee meetings of the World Trade Organization in June and November, trade groups and eleven alcohol-exporting countries, including the United States, expressed concerns, questioned the scientific validity of the cancer warning and argued that Ireland's labels would infringe on free trade.

In comments submitted to the World Trade Organization, the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States called the labels "inaccurate" and "misleading." The group also suggested that "this important public health objective would be best managed" as part of a parallel effort to address cancer in the European Union, an area where the alcohol industry has proved to have greater influence.

The European Commission was supposed to propose language for alcohol health warnings as part of its Beating Cancer Plan by the end of 2023 but failed to meet that deadline. In December, over the objections of the World Health Organization, the European Parliament approved a report that did not affirm the need for warning labels, instead calling for information on "moderate and responsible drinking."

In the final report, its authors repeatedly watered down language about alcohol's role in disease, narrowing warning only about "harmful" or "excess" of consumption.

Size and design

Cormac Healy, the director of Drinks Ireland, a trade group, said that his organization wasn't entirely utterly opposed to health warnings. But he said that the mandated size of the labels would be impractical for use on smaller products, picking a 50-milliliter bottle up from his desk to demonstrate. And the warning language itself was "disproportionate and inaccurate," he said, and primarily geared toward scaring people.

"To inform, to educate — you can't really do that on a label," he added.

In the United States, alcohol warning labels are typically on the back of the bottle or can, where they blend in with other graphic features. Dr. Marissa Hall, an assistant professor in the department of health behavior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said that the labels would be more effective at catching a purchaser's eye if they were on the front, included an image or icon, and featured one of a rotating group of brief messages.

Dr. Hall recently received a grant from the National Institutes of Health to test the impact of stronger design features. When she tells friends about her research, many are surprised to learn the United States requires warning labels at all, she said, because the existing ones so easily go unnoticed.

"They have no idea," she said.

In the last 15 years, a few countries have proposed stronger alcohol warning labels, but each has been met with fierce opposition, said Paula O'Brien, a professor of law at the University of Melbourne. In 2010, Thailand proposed requiring a rotating group of warnings accompanied by graphic color imagery; O'Brien called it "the high-water mark for alcohol labeling." But at the World Trade Organization, other countries raised concerns that the labels would restrain free trade, and the measure stalled.

In 2016, South Korea overcame similar objections to mandate a group of warning labels, some of which link alcohol with cancer, that alcohol makers can choose from to put on their products.

Even research on the topic has been contentious. In 2017, Yukon, a sparsely populated territory in northwest Canada, forged a partnership with scientists to introduce and test the impact of brightly colored warning labels, one of which included the phrase "alcohol can cause cancer." But after alcohol trade groups complained, the local government paused the study out of fear it would face a lawsuit that it could not afford to fight.

"I was a bit surprised about the strength of the reaction," said Dr. Erin Hobin, a scientist at Public Health Ontario who led the project in Yukon.

When the researchers resumed the study several months later, on the condition that the cancer warning be omitted, they found that people buying alcoholic beverages featuring the labels were still more likely to notice the messages, and reported reducing their drinking. Sales of products carrying the labels also fell by around 7 percent during the intervention and several months that followed.

Most importantly, Dr. Hobin said, as drinkers grew more informed about the link between alcohol and cancer, they also became more likely to support policies for controlling alcohol availability, pricing and marketing, which have been shown to reduce drinking even more.

If the alcohol industry dissuaded the European Union from adopting warning labels, it would keep Ireland isolated and out of harmony with European law. That could ultimately form a basis for challenging the labeling requirement in Irish courts, said Dr. Ollie Bartlett, an assistant professor of law at Maynooth University in Ireland. But he said that such efforts were unlikely to prevail because Ireland's alcohol warning labels are "proportionate to the objective of protecting public health."

Observers say the European Union isn't likely to take any further action until after parliamentary elections this summer. And there's no indication that Ireland will retreat from its commitment to require the labels starting in May 2026.

Dr. Gauden Galea, a strategic adviser at the World Health Organization, said he was confident that broader labeling efforts would eventually succeed. At 63, he's old enough to recall how cigarette companies once advertised on the front pages of newspapers, he added.

Eventually, he hopes, "People will not remember the time when you needed a warning on pesticides, but could sell an unlabeled carcinogen like alcohol with impunity."

2 dead, 2 injured in drunk driving crash on Interstate 80 in Omaha

Written by 6 News Staff Report

OMAHA, Neb. (WOWT) - Two people died and three others were injured in a drunk driving crash on Interstate 80 in Omaha.

Officers were called to respond to a crash on Interstate 80 near South 24th Street shortly after 1:30 a.m. Saturday. A preliminary investigation revealed that an SUV going the wrong way collided head-on with a sedan.

Medical personnel declared 26-year-old Ross L. Lewis of Wilbur, Neb., who was a passenger in the sedan, dead at the scene. The driver of the sedan, 30-year-old Kyle Arnold of Omaha, died shortly after being transported to Nebraska Medicine.

Police identified Maison King of Oakland, Neb., as the driver of the SUV that was traveling the wrong way. He is being treated for injuries and will be charged with two counts of motor vehicle homicide, DUI, and other possible charges.

One other passenger was taken into surgery with life-threatening injuries.

Interstate 80 westbound remained closed for about four hours after the crash, reopening around 5:30 a.m.

Columbus man sentenced to prison for repeat driving offense

Written by Unknown

A judge on Wednesday sentenced a man to prison stemming from his arrest in November 2022 for driving offenses.

According to a press release issued by Colfax County Attorney Bruce Prenda on Thursday, Jeffrey Roan, 35, was sentenced on Wednesday in Colfax County District Court to 4 to 6 years in the Nebraska Department of Corrections for second-offense driving during revocation.

The Schuyler Police Department arrested Roan on Nov. 24, 2022, on suspicion of fifth-offense driving under the influence, driving during revocation and driving without an ignition interlock device. The DUI and interlock charges were dismissed as part of a plea deal.

Roan later was charged with failure to appear after absconding to New Jersey in January 2023, Prenda said. He was sentenced to a concurrent 2-year prison term for failing to show up to court.

"This case is another example of recurring criminal driving behavior involving alcohol and court-ordered license revocation," Prenda said. "It continues to present a public safety threat in Colfax County and remains a high-priority law enforcement issue."

NU regents approve beer and alcohol sales at Nebraska baseball games effective immediately

Written by Evan Bland

LINCOLN — The three Nebraska students huddled together on the third-base concourse, one hand in pocket and standing against a slight chilly breeze. Their other hands were wrapped around 16-ounce Coors Light cans.

Typical for a baseball game. History on Friday night for a Husker contest at Haymarket Park.

Grant Hausmann, Josiah Moya and Mitch Rolls grinned reflecting on how they became unofficial pioneers as the first fans to buy alcohol more than an hour before NU and Maryland played under the lights.

“I’d normally get a hot dog and I’m still going to go get a hot dog,” said Rolls, a Sidney graduate sipping from a can while cradling another crushed one. “Usually I would have gotten water.”

Alcoholic beverages are on the menu for the stretch run of the Husker baseball season. The Nebraska Board of Regents passed the motion for alcohol sales at Haymarket Park by a 5-2 vote Friday morning at its meeting inside Varner Hall in a move long anticipated by thirsty Husker fans who gather at the ballpark each spring.

The proposal — which prompted a 15-minute regents discussion — drew dissenting votes from Omaha Regent Barb Weitz and Regent Kathy Wilmot of Beaver City. All four student regents voted to pass the motion.

The decision, effectively immediately, was immediately visible Friday evening and will be for NU’s other 11 remaining regular-season baseball games and potential postseason action. The “Craft Corner” stood open behind home plate offering cans, drafts, wine and mixed drinks. Seltzers, craft options and a variety of other cans and drafts were available on rolling cards on the first-base and third-base sides. Some fans settling into the Diamond View Lounge expressed surprise at the draft options suddenly available, with the vendor assuring it was an easy transition.

Jim Bunch and Cindi Card — a married Lincoln couple — carried 16-ounce plastic cups of their favorite selection from Kinkaid Brewing Co. As season-ticket holders for the Lincoln Saltdogs, Nebraska men’s and women’s basketball and the Omaha Storm Chasers, the moment felt natural. As season-ticket holders long residing in Section 107, not so much.

“You’re enjoying it,” Bunch said with a smile. “There are better ways to get a glow on than \$9 beers.”

“Wish the weather would have cooperated,” Card said of the mid-50s temperatures and overcast skies. “But cold beer stays colder longer.”

The proposal seemed unlikely to even be a topic at the regents meeting Friday until an 11th-hour agreement last week between NU administrators — led by interim president Chris Kabourek and new athletic director Troy Dannen — and NEBCO, Inc., which owns the Saltdogs and jointly runs Haymarket Park with the university. Previous talks had stalled in how revenue sharing for Nebraska alcohol sales would split between the parties, with the breakthrough deal being that all

such revenue will be reinvested back into the 23-year-old ballpark for a variety of capital improvements.

“This will be a win-win for both partners in terms of finding a revenue stream to help chip away at some of those issues,” Kabourek said. “It’s not going to solve all of them but it certainly will help.”

Said Regent Jim Scheer, who has opposed similar proposals in the past: “We are getting a pretty good bang for the buck here by allowing this.”

The Saltdogs, an independent professional team, have offered alcohol at their games for more than two decades and already have the infrastructure in place to make the switch relatively seamless for Nebraska. Both the Huskers and Saltdogs otherwise keep the respective profits from their own concessions sales, with the pro club handling coordination of concessions.

The athletic department has already incorporated alcohol sales into many of its other events. The 2022 Big Ten wrestling tournament at Pinnacle Bank Arena was a landmark moment in that regard. PBA has completed two seasons offering drinks at Husker men’s and women’s basketball games. Two Memorial Stadium events — the Garth Brooks concert in August 2021 and Volleyball Day in August 2023 — also included alcohol sales. The majority of Big Ten schools already regularly offer alcohol at many of their events.

Kabourek said Friday there have been no significant alcohol-related fan incidents at any previous NU occasion. Outgoing Nebraska-Kearney Chancellor Doug said he couldn’t recall any issues with serving alcohol at outdoor Lopers sporting events in roughly 15 years since it’s been available.

“I’m confident we can add this amenity at Husker baseball and softball games responsibly in a way that enhances the experiences of our fans,” Kabourek said.

Weitz questioned whether a “piecemeal” sport-by-sport approach to Nebraska approving alcohol sales was most prudent and encouraged the board to have further discussions to determine its big-picture alcohol policy for Husker events. Wilmot challenged whether approving the motion is really a fan “enhancement” as labeled by many.

“You’re forgetting the family aspect,” Wilmot said. “You’re forgetting the kids.”

Other regents complimented the Abel family — owners of NEBCO and longtime Nebraska supporters — and Husker administrators for reaching a mutually beneficial agreement that will create low six-figure revenue for Haymarket Park upgrades.

“I believe strongly in treating adults like adults,” Regent Robert Schafer said. “As long as adults can behave like adults, they should be able to enjoy a beverage if that’s what they choose.”

Sarpy County deputies make multiple arrests after responding to large disturbance this weekend

Written by Jake Anderson

SARPY COUNTY, Neb. —Sarpy County deputies arrested 10 people after a large disturbance at a residence early Sunday morning.

Around 12:49 p.m., deputies responded to the area of 189th and Briar streets for a complaint of a loud party at a residence and had information that there may be underage drinking at the party, authorities said.

The Sarpy County Sheriff's Office said deputies found a large crowd of about 125 people, mostly estimated to be between the ages of 18-25, at the residence, which has a history of being used as an Airbnb.

Deputies said a man ran from the location, and he was taken into custody after a brief foot pursuit. As he was being detained, a large crowd surrounded the deputies leading to a "help an officer" call, the Sarpy County Sheriff's Office said.

The scene was "quickly brought under control," authorities said.

Further investigation showed that about 50 more people were inside the residence with drugs and guns, the Sarpy County Sheriff's Office said.

The Sarpy SWAT and Crisis Negotiation teams responded to the scene and helped with a controlled release of the remained people inside the residence, authorities said.

A total of 10 people were arrested: Brelin Lewis for possession of a weapon by a prohibited person, obstructing, resisting arrest; Wal Chuol and Marquez Lumpkin-Cokes for CCW violation, possession of marijuana; and seven others for a warrant: Ruach Reat, Malik George, Quantrell Russ, Nyaruot Bangot, Lam Kuang, Magline Phelemon.

Deputies also found and seized a total of four handguns from several individuals, as well as marijuana, paraphernalia, empty alcohol bottles and another handgun inside the residence, authorities said.

"None of the individuals encountered during this incident were residents of Sarpy County, and many had known gang affiliations," the Sarpy County Sheriff's Office said in a statement.

An Airbnb spokesperson told KETV: "Airbnb bans disruptive and unauthorized parties, and the reported behavior has no place on our platform. Our specialized Safety team immediately removed the booking guest from Airbnb and we stand ready to assist the Sarpy County's Sheriff's Office as they investigate."

Midlands Voices: Nebraska needs to take action to reduce excessive drinking

Written by Chris Wagner

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, but what do Nebraskans know about excessive alcohol consumption, its impact on our health, and its impact on the health and safety of our neighborhoods?

For starters, we know that Nebraska is consistently one of the worst states for binge drinking (drinking 4+ drinks for women and 5+ for men on an occasion). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we are currently the seventh-worst binge drinking state in the country. This is consequential because binge drinking is responsible for a significant percentage of the harms we experience as a state.

One of those harms is cancer, which is why the state's most recent comprehensive cancer control plan prioritized achieving a 2% reduction in our adult binge drinking rate by June 2021 — from 19.5 to 17.5%. Unfortunately, we did not achieve that objective. Truthfully, we didn't even come close. Our binge drinking rate peaked in 2018 at 21.2% and has been slowly declining since then.

A majority of Americans are also unaware that alcohol causes at least seven types of cancer in humans: breast, colon and rectum, esophagus, mouth, throat, and voice box. In Nebraska, alcohol is responsible for an estimated 112 cancer deaths and 1,715 years of potential life lost each year.

However, alcohol-related cancer deaths only account for 11% of our estimated annual deaths (1,001) due to excessive alcohol consumption through binge drinking, underage drinking, heavy drinking and drinking by pregnant women. Alcoholic liver disease (235 deaths), heart disease and stroke (226), motor vehicle crashes (75), and suicide (59) make up the top five categories. And all of these deaths can be prevented.

Excessive alcohol consumption also presents a huge economic burden for those who live and do business in our state. Our economic costs (lost work productivity and increased health care, corrections, and law enforcement costs) amount to nearly \$1.2 billion each year, nearly \$500 million of which is borne by Nebraska taxpayers. Good Nebraskans are essentially subsidizing the reckless behavior of a fraction of our population.

Raising awareness during April and throughout the year can be important. People need to understand the issue, but increased awareness isn't the answer to this complicated problem. Bars aren't going to stop serving to intoxicated customers because they read this article; the University of Nebraska isn't going to suddenly reverse course and stop its march toward alcohol sales at university events (we already shared this information with the Board of Regents on multiple occasions); and alcohol-related crime is unlikely to see any decline following the publication of this piece.

There is, however, a path forward. The World Health Organization recommends several cost-effective strategies for governments to prevent these harms and their costs, including placing restrictions on alcohol advertising, restricting the availability of alcohol, and increasing the price of alcohol. The Nebraska Legislature recently passed an interim study (Legislative Resolution 353) to look at the pricing and taxation of alcohol in Nebraska as the result of the advocacy of middle

and high school students in the Omaha area. This is an important first step because the scientific literature demonstrates how effective pricing strategies can be.

For example, Maryland implemented a 3% alcohol sales tax in 2011. Within five years, Maryland saw a 17% decrease in adult binge drinking and a 26% reduction in high school youth alcohol consumption along with a 28% reduction in youth binge drinking. It also led to a significant gradual annual reduction of 6% in the population-based rate of all alcohol-positive drivers and a 12% reduction for drivers aged 15-20 years and 21-34 years. It is not hard to imagine how an alcohol sales tax, or an increase in the existing alcohol excise tax, could make Nebraska a healthier and safer place for all.

Our news headlines are awash in drunk driving crashes. Awareness is an important first step, but now more than ever we need action.