



Put In Your 2¢ Worth...

About 2¢ a drink yields \$44 million annually to reduce the impact of alcohol problems in Missouri.

Question:

How can legislators justify keeping Missouri's state alcohol excise taxes so low when they are making "tough decisions" on the budget, and reducing access to Medicaid for some of our neediest people – even when they say that the services are needed but not affordable?

Answer:

Some of the answers given are a simple "I don't support new taxes or revenue of any kind." Others acknowledge the inequity but defer to their caucus or leadership. It is not a partisan issue. See legislators' responses, as reported by their constituents (below).

MISSOURI ALCOHOL IMPACT FACT #61

- "Alcohol excise taxes are a 'third rail' issue: touch it and you die. The alcohol industry's political influence is that strong. It would be a form of political suicide." (*Fact: Legislators who have supported the issue in the past are doing quite well. Since it has gotten so little attention, the claim really can't be supported.*)
- "It is unfair to single out a specific industry." (*Fact: No other industry deals with intoxicating beverages with well-know potential for harm, which even the industry itself admits. That harm is evident in several pieces of pending legislation.*)
- "Alcoholic beverages are already taxed too highly." (*Fact: The state excise tax on beer remains at \$0.006 per 12-oz.; on wine, \$0.015 per drink; on spirits, \$\$0.022 per mixed drink.*)
- "I haven't given it any thought since it is well-known that proposals for change in the alcohol tax rates never go anywhere." (*Fact: That would appear to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.*)
- "The state's problem is not a revenue problem; it is a spending problem." (*Fact: On some issues the same legislator finds that the problem is, in fact, limited revenue, though it varies with the issue under discussion.*)
- "My constituents don't want higher taxes of any kind." (*Fact: The 2005 Mitchell poll found that support from registered voters runs from 66% to 74% in favor of increases in the alcohol excise tax rates, especially when the proceeds are earmarked for reduction of alcohol-related problems. Republican voters are as likely to favor as are Democratic voters.*)
- "It is a regressive tax. It hurts low-income people disproportionately." (*Fact: The industry has raised prices on its products many times, without an increase in the tax rates, and apparently without regard to ability-to-pay.*)
- "If it comes to the floor, you can count on my vote." (*Fact: In 24 attempts over a 35-year period, proposals have never been put to a vote on the floor. No floor vote has been taken since December, 1970, in special session.*)

For more information call one of the Missouri's Alcohol Impact Coalition members below:

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