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## **Tell the “Big 5” to Charge 25 Cents**

### **Higher Alcohol Taxes Will Ease California’s Budget Crisis**

SAN RAFAEL, CA (May 21, 2009) --- Marin Institute, the alcohol industry watchdog, is demanding today that California’s “Big 5” - Governor Schwarzenegger, Speaker of the Assembly Karen Bass, Senate President Darrell Steinberg, Assembly Minority Floor Leader Michael Villines, and Senate Minority Leader Dennis Hollingsworth – include a new 25 cent-per-drink alcohol tax in any new budget proposal to help the state recover from its current economic meltdown.

*“California’s budget has tanked, the Governor’s propositions have failed, and now is the time for true leadership in Sacramento,”* said Marin Institute Executive Director Bruce Lee Livingston. *“The citizens are waking up to the failure of policymakers. The alcohol tax should be back on the table to help ease California’s budget crisis.”*

Despite being the largest alcohol market in the nation, California’s current beer, spirits, and wine excise tax rates, which have not been raised in 18 years, are lower than the national average. Only Louisiana has a lower wine tax rate than California.

An across the board quarter-a-drink increase in California’s alcohol excise tax will produce \$3.44 billion in new revenue for the state’s general fund. The new alcohol tax revenues will help solve significant budget shortfalls and fund critical programs such as prevention, treatment, emergency room and trauma care, healthcare, mental health, crime prevention and traffic safety.

*“Not only will the state budget benefit from this rising tide of new revenue,”* said Livingston, *“but alcohol tax increases will reduce alcohol-related harm in the state.”*

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, higher alcohol taxes lead to reductions in the frequency of drinking and heavy drinking among youth, lower traffic fatalities, and reduced incidences of alcohol-related crime.

*“It’s been 18 years since the last alcohol tax increase in California, there could not be a more appropriate time for the industry to pay up,”* said Livingston. *“And it’s time for our elected leaders in Sacramento to step-up and demand this increase on behalf of the government and all Californians.”*

*Marin Institute is an alcohol industry watchdog based in San Rafael, CA.*

[www.marininstitute.org](http://www.marininstitute.org).

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