

Alcohol tax in Anchorage is to benefit residents

by Jim Crary

Most people would agree that Anchorage would not be worse off if less alcohol was consumed here. However the alcohol industry vigorously disagrees with anything that will lessen booze consumption because less booze consumed would mean smaller profits; something they want to avoid at any cost.

Anchorage spends almost \$17,000,000 annually to deal with the problems caused by alcohol abuse. Those problems include domestic violence, homicides, suicides, rapes, D.W.I.s, the care and education of fetal alcohol syndrome children and violent assaults among others. Right

now alcohol contributes almost nothing towards paying for these costs.

On April 18th Anchorage voters will have the opportunity to vote for an 8% retail level alcohol sales tax and finally make alcohol pay for some of the costs that it causes in Anchorage. The liquor industry is fighting this sales tax every inch of the way because they know all too well that even a modest increase of 8% in the price of booze will cause a slight decrease in consumption.

Last year, in the wake of a totally misleading advertising blitz by the alcohol industry a similar alcohol sales tax was narrowly defeated at the polls.

This tax will raise almost

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\$8,000,000. This will be the first significant contribution alcohol has ever made towards paying for some of the costs it has causes Anchorage to incur.

In a report entitled, "Options For Cost Containment in the Criminal Justice System", the Criminal Justice Work Group formed by former governor Hickel unanimously agreed on only one thing; "That alcohol is far and away the number one cause of crime in Alaska and that reducing alcohol use by even a small amount would reduce crime...." Tragically Alaska Natives are disproportionately represented in Alaska's jails and prisons,

and the reason is alcohol.

If anyone has doubts about the linkage between crime and alcohol they need only to look north to Barrow to see the stark difference that the absence of alcohol has made in that community's crime statistics.

Studies have shown that an increase in the price of alcohol, through a tax, will decrease the use of alcohol in younger people who find it harder to afford. This is perhaps the best argument there is for supporting the 8% retail sales alcohol tax on next April's municipal ballot.

If you have any questions or want to help get this tax passed please give me a call at (907) 243-0870.