



## TREASURY NEWS

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### FROM THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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### **TREASURY ANNOUNCES ACTIONS CONCERNING LABELING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**

The Treasury Department and its Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms announced Friday three specific actions concerning the labeling of alcoholic beverages. The three were:

- Treasury and ATF are launching an effort to develop legislation to strengthen its authority over alcohol labels as a way of deterring alcohol beverage marketing directed to underage persons and to prevent alcohol abuse. In doing so, it will consult closely with HHS, industry and health groups.
- ATF is publishing in the Federal Register a notice of proposed rulemaking prohibiting alcohol beverage containers that mislead consumers about the alcohol character of the product particularly those that appear to be marketed to underage persons.
- ATF approved two new statements for wine labels that had been requested by wine producers, but only after modifications.

"Treasury is continuing its efforts to combat underage drinking and will work to strengthen our authority to ensure that products are neither targeted at nor provided to minors," said Treasury Under Secretary for Enforcement James E. Johnson.

With regard to the legislation, Treasury will consider a number of options, including whether to require the Government Warning Statement on alcohol beverage products be rotated among different messages, and whether to require all alcohol advertisements to carry a Government Warning Statement. Treasury will also look at other legislative proposals to strengthen its authority over alcohol marketing practices targeted at underage consumers or that encourage alcohol abuse.

ATF is immediately seeking comment on a rule to stop the misleading packaging of alcohol products, especially those that would be attractive to children. Examples of this would be products that resemble frozen flavored ice products, gelatin products and non-alcoholic fruit sodas and drinks.

Also today, two statements were approved for wine labels. The two statements are:

- "The proud people who made this wine encourage you to consult your family doctor about the health effects of wine consumption."
- "To learn the health effects of wine consumption, send for the Federal Government's Dietary Guidelines for Americans, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA, 1120 20th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036 or visit its [website](#).

Alcohol beverage labels are approved by ATF to make sure they do not contain statements or representations that are likely to mislead consumers about the product. ATF worked with industry to modify their proposed

statements to meet these criteria.

"Under existing law, ATF can only deny labeling statements if they are false or misleading," said Treasury General Counsel Ed Knight. He said ATF determined that the labeling statements approved today met the factual standards as not being false or misleading because these statements do not make any health claim, but simply direct consumers to sources for information about the health effect of alcohol consumption.

In an effort to determine consumers' perceptions of the two statements, ATF relied on a survey of current wine drinkers conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, an office within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The findings indicate that for most of those who participated in the study, drinking patterns would not be influenced by the message on the label.

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