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February 1, 2008

The Honorable John Manfreda
Administrator
Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20044-4412

Dear Mr. Manfreda:

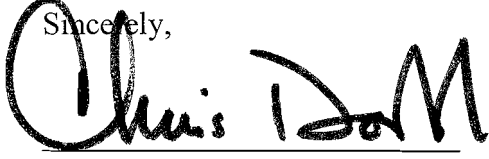
I am writing in response to the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking of August 31, 2007 addressing the labeling of alcoholic beverages. I commend the TTB for moving forward on efforts to provide more complete information on alcoholic beverages. As you know, alcoholic beverages are the only food or beverage item for which standardized information is not readily available on a label for consumers to consider.

I agree strongly with your proposal to require the listing of nutritional information on alcoholic beverages. Today, many Americans rely on the "Nutrition Facts" panel found on many of the foods and beverages they consume to determine important nutritional information and a product's ingredients. Requiring such information in a uniform and straightforward manner is critically important and will allow consumers to make educated dietary decisions when consuming these products.

In order to further aid consumers in making responsible decisions, they should also be provided the amount of alcohol in the beverages they consume. Accordingly I urge you to improve the Proposed Rule by requiring the amount of alcohol per serving, in fluid ounces, and number of servings per container, to be clearly stated in a uniform Serving Facts panel. I also believe the rule should require the panel to define moderate drinking, as specified in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines, and state that a standard drink contains 0.6 fl. oz of alcohol. Additionally I urge you to modify the proposal to require the listing of the standard drink serving sizes of 12 fl. oz of beer, 5 fl. oz of wine, and 1.5 fl. oz of distilled spirits, that have been accepted by the public health community for decades.

Taking these steps now represents current understanding of how best to provide consumers the information they need to make responsible decisions. However, because new research may reveal promising or novel ways to better present information on the nutrition and alcohol content of these types of products, I urge the TTB to conduct and solicit further research to ensure that the most accurate and up to date labeling information is provided to consumers.

Again, I thank you and your staff for your valuable work on this important issue, and I trust that you will take my concerns into consideration as you finalize an updated alcohol labeling rule.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senator