



September 19, 2005

Mr. Frank Foote
Director, Regulations and Rulings Division
Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau
1310 G Street, NW - 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Director Foote:

On behalf of the 350,000 members of the National Taxpayers Union, I urge the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau to allow voluntary disclosure of serving and nutrition information on alcoholic beverage labels.

When a consumer picks up an alcoholic beverage, the only nutritional statement he or she will consistently see is a health warning. Should the individual turn the container around looking for additional nutritional or serving facts, little or no supplementary information is listed. In fact, it is prohibited. While the government requires nutritional labels on practically every packaged food and beverage item on the market, it bans such labels on alcoholic products. The regulatory disconnect here is simply absurd and ready for reform.

Beneficial information, such as serving size, number of servings per container, and calorie count would help consumers make more responsible drinking decisions, just as a dieter would consult a nutrition label to determine fat content in a meal. In fact, a recent poll of consumers found that 83 percent favored allowing companies to inform purchasers how much alcohol is in a standard serving. As Americans become more mindful of their dietary habits, they will want more information at the point of purchase and consumption, not less.

This comes at no surprise. Access to information is one of the most powerful forces for keeping free societies healthy and robust. In an age when information is becoming increasingly available through channels like the Internet, it is outdated and overbearing to prevent companies from voluntarily delivering nutritional facts directly into the hands of consumers. If beverage companies are willing to meet a market demand for more information, the government should not stand in the way. Common sense and current trends favor the repeal of archaic federal requirements preventing businesses from offering serving and nutritional data on their alcoholic products.

At the same time, we should not head to the other extreme of the spectrum by requiring every wine, beer, or spirits company (regardless of size, ability, or inclination) to provide serving information. Voluntary nutritional labels will go a long way in making sure small businesses are not drowned by extra regulatory burdens and that bureaucratic bloat (and thereby taxpayer expense) remains at a minimum. As in most instances, less regulation is better regulation.

Sincerely,

Kristina Rasmussen
Government Affairs Manager