

# National PTA Resolution

## Dangers of Alcoholic Energy Drinks

**December 15, 2008**  
**Virginia PTA**

Jean Farrar, Chair  
Michelle Prescott, Vice Chair  
Resolutions Committee Virginia State PTA  
18 Island View Drive  
Newport News, Virginia 23602  
resolutions@vapta.org  
jhfarrar@aol.com  
757 872 7736

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## **Dangers of Alcoholic Energy Drinks**

- Whereas, Non-alcoholic energy drinks are a multi-billion dollar industry. The packaging of alcoholic energy drinks mimics non-alcoholic energy drinks, which particularly appeal to youth; and
- Whereas, Alcoholic drinks with caffeine appeal to young people who consume caffeinated non-alcoholic energy drinks. Thirty-one percent of 12 to 17 year-olds report regular consumption of non-alcoholic energy drinks; and
- Whereas, Alcoholic energy drinks are prepackaged beverages containing alcohol, which is a depressant, and stimulants such as caffeine and guarana; and
- Whereas, Adding stimulants to alcohol reduces a drinker’s perception of intoxication and promotes the delusion of drinking and functioning without impairment; and
- Whereas, In an agreement with a coalition of State Attorneys General, Anheuser-Busch and Miller/Coors have discontinued distribution of alcoholic energy drinks. However, other companies continue to produce these beverages; and therefore be it
- Resolved, National PTA and its constituent organizations educate parents, students, administrators, teachers and community members about the dangers of consuming alcoholic energy drinks; and be it further
- Resolved, National PTA and its constituent organizations seek legislation requiring that alcoholic energy drink manufacturers provide prominent alcohol content percentage on the label, as well as health and safety warnings indicating the dangers of combining alcohol with caffeinated beverages.

Summary: The story of alcoholic energy drinks begins with the introduction and rapidly developing popularity of nonalcoholic energy drinks in the marketplace. Production of alcoholic energy drinks is the latest trend in the extremely lucrative alcoholic beverage market. Because they can appear to be a typical energy drink, many under-age children can purchase these items with no ID. While some manufacturers have stopped the production of these drinks, many others continue to fuel the market trend. Studies show that combining alcohol and other “energy components” in drinks can cause delusions and injury to users. Adding stimulants to alcohol reduces a drinker’s perception of intoxication and promotes the false impression of drinking and functioning without impairment.

**Marin Institute Report  
Alcohol, Energy Drinks, and Youth:  
A Dangerous Mix**

<http://www.marininstitute.org/alcopops/resources/EnergyDrinkReport.pdf>

**Executive Summary**

Public health and safety officials have become alarmed by the newest entry into the world of alcoholic beverages. **Alcoholic energy drinks are prepackaged beverages that contain not only alcohol but also caffeine and other stimulants. (3) Earlier this year, 29 state attorneys general signed a letter to Anheuser-Busch expressing their concern about Spykes, an alcoholic energy drink packaged in colorful 2-ounce bottles with obvious appeal to youth. The objections of law enforcement officials as well as parents and leading public health organizations caused Anheuser-Busch to pull Spykes from the market. But the story does not end there. Many other alcoholic energy drinks are still on the market. (5)** Despite the sharp increase in sales of alcoholic energy drinks, their appeal to underage drinkers, and the health concerns involved in mixing stimulants with alcohol, research on the potential dangers of these products remains limited. This study reviews what data is available and takes an in-depth look at the alcohol industry's marketing practices promoting the consumption of alcoholic energy drinks. The results, while preliminary, are unsettling. Both scientists and policymakers should focus increased attention on this emerging product category.

**Targeting Youth**

To understand how alcoholic energy drinks are marketed, it is critical to examine the popularity of nonalcoholic energy drinks among youth. Teenagers and young adults are the core consumer group for these products. **Thirty-one percent of 12- to 17-year-olds and 34 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds report regular consumption of energy drinks. (2)**

Miller Brewing Company and Anheuser-Busch, the two largest U.S. brewers, are the leading producers of this new alcoholic beverage category, with brands that include Sparks, Tilt, and Bud Extra. **Their marketing tactics mirror those used for nonalcoholic energy drinks: "grassroots" consumer strategies; images and messages that promote their association with partying and other high energy activities; and containers that have sizes, shapes, and graphics similar to their nonalcoholic cousins. The similarities in containers create the potential for confusion among consumers, retailers, parents, law enforcement officers, and others regarding which products contain alcohol and which do not. Alcoholic energy drinks are also a cheap alternative to purchasing alcoholic beverages and energy drinks separately. Taken together, these strategies strongly suggest that alcohol companies are marketing alcoholic energy drinks to young people. (1)**

**Health Concerns**

Although there is debate regarding the overall risks and benefits of energy drink and moderate caffeine consumption, **health researchers agree that caffeine consumption can have adverse health consequences, particularly at high doses. Among the most common negative effects are increased anxiety, panic attacks, increased blood pressure, increased gastric acid, bowel irritability, and insomnia. With the rising popularity of energy drinks and with more**

**young people ingesting high levels of caffeine, more serious health problems are now being reported in the nation’s poison centers, while reports from other countries suggest potentially serious consequences from caffeine overdose. (4)**

Although the research community has not yet fully confronted the potential health risks associated with adding alcohol to energy drinks, the studies that have been done suggest serious cause for concern. **Caffeine, a stimulant, masks the intoxicating effects of alcohol, which may lead to increased risk-taking. Young people are therefore particularly vulnerable to increased problems from ingesting these products, since they are more likely to take risks than adults and to suffer high rates of alcohol problems, including alcohol-related traffic accidents, violence, sexual assault, and suicide. (4)**

### **A Call to Action**

The available research suggests that alcoholic energy drinks create a dangerous mix. Yet the alcohol industry markets the beverages with messages that fail to alert users to the potential for misjudging one’s intoxication. Indeed, these messages irresponsibly suggest that the beverages will enhance alertness and energy. Action is needed from both the alcohol industry and from governments at all levels. Alcoholic beverage producers should discontinue the production of alcoholic energy drinks pending further scientific study that demonstrates the products’ safety, particularly for young people. The federal government should conduct investigations into the marketing of these products, conduct research to determine any link to both short- and long-term health problems, particularly among young people, and initiate a public information campaign to alert consumers, parents, and law enforcement to the risks associated with mixing alcohol and energy drinks. State and local governments should not wait for federal action and should initiate their own investigations, research, and public information campaigns. Community groups, parents, law enforcement agencies, and citizens also need to take action, calling for industry marketing reforms and governmental action. The alcohol industry’s marketing of alcoholic energy drinks should be vigorously opposed before the products become even more popular. To risk delaying action until further studies can be conducted is to experiment with the health of young people. Furthermore, past experience shows that a swift response is critical or the economic benefits associated with alcoholic energy drinks’ sale will become entrenched, making regulation far more difficult.

### **Introduction**

**Alcoholic energy drinks—prepackaged beverages that contain alcohol, caffeine, and other stimulants—are the newest entries into the world of alcoholic beverages. (3)** Their introduction has alarmed public health and safety officials, as illustrated by the reaction to Spykes, a 12 percent alcoholic energy drink packaged in 2-ounce bottles that come in flavors such as “hot chocolate” and “spicy mango.” **On May 10, 2007, 29 state attorneys general sent a letter to Anheuser-Busch, Spykes’s producer, which stated in part: Given the documented health and safety risks of consuming alcohol in combination with caffeine or other stimulants, Anheuser-Busch’s decision to introduce and promote these alcoholic energy drinks is extremely troubling. Young people are heavy consumers of nonalcoholic energy drinks, and the manufacturers of those products explicitly target the teenage market. Promoting alcoholic beverages through the use of ingredients, packaging features, logos and marketing messages that mimic those of nonalcoholic refreshments overtly**

**capitalizes on the youth marketing that already exists for drinks that may be legally purchased by underage consumers. (5)** The uproar from not only a majority of states' chief law enforcement officials but also parents and leading organizations and officials in public health, education, and nutrition led to Anheuser-Busch's decision to pull Spykes from the market.<sup>2</sup> Yet, despite this concession, the alcohol industry, including Anheuser-Busch, has introduced numerous other alcoholic energy drinks, is using the very marketing tactics criticized by the attorneys general, and views these drinks as having great market-growth potential.

### **Teens: Driving the Market for Nonalcoholic Energy Drinks**

Teenagers and young adults are undoubtedly the core consumer group for energy drinks. This reality is a cause for concern, given the recent emergence of alcoholic energy drinks and the similarity in the packaging between the two categories. There is a paucity of epidemiological studies assessing the demographics of energy drink consumers, but data are available from market surveys. Mintel International Group has conducted the most comprehensive study, relying on Simmons Teen Survey data (a comprehensive analysis of teen purchasing behavior).<sup>9</sup> **Thirty-one percent of 12- to 17-year-olds (2)** and 34 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds report regular consumption of energy drinks, compared with 22 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds, with rates decreasing rapidly with age. Only 3 percent of seniors 65 years of age and older report any consumption. **Consumption begins at very early ages: 28 percent of 12- to 14-year-olds report regular consumption of energy drinks. (1)** **Teen consumption has grown rapidly since 2002. For 12- to 17-year-olds, rates increased from 18 percent in 2002 to 31 percent in 2006. (1)**

### **Marketing Strategies Promote Youth Consumption**

Given the increasing concerns over alcoholic energy drinks, it is critical to understand how the nonalcoholic counterpart are marketed. Of course, it is legal for children to purchase energy drinks, but as discussed in the next section, alcohol companies appear to be mimicking the marketing strategies for nonalcoholic energy drinks, thereby capitalizing on the popularity of nonalcoholic energy drinks among youth. With such a young core consumer base, energy drink marketing focuses on youth themes and strategies. Mintel International Group attributes the popularity of such themes and strategies to their association with teenagers' drive for rebellion, risk taking, and adventure seeking. Marketers use dramatic product names (e.g., Cocaine, DareDevil, Bawls, Pimp Juice, Rip It, and Monster Assault), edgy graphics on containers, and sponsorships of extreme sporting events and lifestyles, such as wakeboarding, skateboarding, motocross, and surfing.

**Manufacturers support the marketing messages and themes with higher concentrations of caffeine, increasing the “jolt” or stimulant effect of the products. Many energy drinks contain substantially higher levels of caffeine than do servings of coffee. (3)**

**Youth appeal is further supported through the easy access of energy drinks at convenience stores, an important venue for teen purchasing. The marketing strategies are communicated at a “grassroots” level, as opposed to traditional channels (such as**

**television, radio, magazine, and outdoor advertising), because companies are looking for “one-on-one relationships” gained through events, extreme sports sponsorships, Internet interactions, text messaging, and communication among users on Internet sites such as MySpace and Facebook. (2)**

For example, the Monster brand’s “ambassadors” give away free samples at sporting events, concerts, and other teen venues. Red Bull owns teams such as the New York Red Bulls soccer team and plans to start its own NASCAR team. Mintel reports that these nontraditional forms of marketing are critical to energy drink promotions, highlighting, in particular, consumer interactions on the Internet: **The most current trend in energy drinks marketing is from its users in cyberspace. Users of most brands have created their myspace.com pages where users are shown drinking energy drinks. For example, on www.myspace.com/drinkcocaine, there are many pictures of teens drinking Cocaine energy drink. This kind of exposure is a boon to marketers, because users are in effect advertising the products for free. Moreover, it adds street credibility and reflects strong grassroots support. (2)**

### **Targeting Young People with a Cheap Alternative to Mixed Drinks**

**Producers of alcoholic energy drinks are using several tactics to promote their brands, many of which mirror the marketing of nonalcoholic energy drinks. The first tactic involves price: premixed alcoholic energy drinks provide a cheap alternative to purchasing the two types of beverages separately. (Youth are particularly sensitive to price.) In fact, in at least some convenience stores in California, alcoholic energy drinks are cheaper than nonalcoholic energy drinks. (1)**

Another sign that the premixed alcoholic energy drink category is targeted to young people as a low-cost alternative to Red Bull and vodka comes from an article about the development of a product called Catalyst, just released in 2006.

### **Creating Brand Confusion with Nonalcoholic Energy Drinks**

**Alcohol producers promote the close association of their products with energy drinks by mimicking their containers, including size, shape, and graphics. These similarities create the potential for confusion among consumers, retailers, parents, law enforcement officers, and others regarding which products contain alcohol and which do not. (1)**

## **Energy Drinks With Alcohol Attract Teens -- A Little Vodka In Your Ginseng? New energy drinks come with a kick**

By Mark Allwood

<http://jscms.jrn.columbia.edu/cns/2006-04-18/allwood-alcoholicenergydrinks>

**Like Sparks, Liquid Charge is a mix of alcohol, caffeine, taurine, ginseng and guarana, a South American berry containing a high amount of caffeine. (Elissa Curtis/CNS) (3)**

**Sparks, a combination of alcohol, caffeine, taurine, ginseng and guarana, is one of the more popular alcoholic energy drinks. (Elissa Curtis/CNS) (3)**

**Liquid Charge, shown here inside a Manhattan mini-mart, is one of several alcoholic energy drinks currently on the market. (Elissa Curtis/CNS) (3)**

As the popularity of energy drinks grew, they went from the grocery store to the nightclub. Now liquor companies and brewers are looking for ways to cash in on energy-boosting alcoholic drinks. Red Bull still rules among energy drinks, but it has been joined by products like Crunk Juice, Pimp Juice, YJ Stinger and Liquid Ice, to name a few. Since they were introduced in the 1990s, bartenders and drinkers thought about new and inventive ways to bring the energy drink into the world of partying. The result was the wildly popular concoction Red Bull and vodka.

**The trend did not go unnoticed in the alcohol industry. Seagram's introduced a line of its ready-mixed gin and juice containing ginseng. And, after bringing out its own energy drink called 180 in 2004, Anheuser-Busch last year unveiled two beer products containing some of the same ingredients found in energy drinks. One of those ingredients is guarana, a South American berry that contains caffeine. (3)**

**Since Red Bull and vodka first became popular, health officials have been quick to point out that being awake is not the same as being sober and that driving after drinking these beverages is just as dangerous as after drinking other alcoholic products. (4)**

Depending on state laws, most beer products contain anywhere from 3 to 5 percent alcohol. Tilt and B to the E contain 6.6 percent, 6 percent or 4 percent alcohol, depending on individual state laws.

“Everybody’s trying to make them into energy drinks and they’re not,” O’Grady said. “They may have some of the same ingredients that other drinks and teas have, but they’re a separate product line.”

**Sparks, produced by McKenzie River Partners of San Francisco, contains 6 percent alcohol, depending on state laws, and the beverage company recently unveiled a product called Sparks Plus, which contains 7 percent alcohol. Unlike Tilt or B to the E, Sparks contains the amino acid taurine, which can be found in Red Bull. The company also produces a Sparks Light. (3)**

**Two years ago, Rolling Stone named Sparks its “Hot Drink of the Year.” “Red Bull and vodka is so Y2K,” said the music magazine. “The wave of the future is Sparks.” Sparks, Tilt and B to the E have all been marketed as an after-work drink, mostly for men, who are making the transition from work to play. (2)**

“Bravo on the marketing and deployment of such a finely crafted beverage,” wrote Eric Urscher of Florida on the Sparks Web site. “It has a flavor all its own, yet with a crispier snap with additional alcohol.”

**Manufacturers of the new alcoholic drinks are hoping to mirror the success of the nonalcoholic energy drinks, which have challenged traditional soft drinks. Last year, the sales volume of carbonated soft drinks fell in the United States for the first time since 1985. Excluding energy drinks, sales fell 0.7 percent. (1)**

Recently, industry newsletter Beverage Business Insights reported that Hansen Natural Corp., maker of Monster energy drinks, and Anheuser-Busch are working on joint products, ranging from an alcoholic energy beverage to incorporating Hansen’s nonalcoholic energy drinks into Anheuser-Busch’s distribution network. An outright acquisition of Hansen by Anheuser-Busch is “not completely out of the question,” the article said.

Frances Mantak, director of health education at Brown University, said alcohol companies are taking notice of a larger trend in American society.

“They look at what the trends are and what people are consuming and can we capitalize on those trends,” Mantak said. “It’s pretty similar to Coke and Pepsi putting out bottled water now. They’re seeing that there are shifts, and wondering, ‘How do we address those shifts in consumption?’”

**Mantak also makes it a point to caution young people about the effects of combining alcohol with energy drinks like Red Bull. A recent study in Brazil found that mixing alcohol with energy drinks does not null intoxication, and in some instances even masks some of the subjective feelings of intoxication. In other words, people feel less drunk than they actually are. (4)**

“If, for example, somebody had Irish whiskey and coffee, they’d have a clearer sense of the opposing effects of those two substances,” Mantak said. “Sometimes people will use Red Bull as a way to make the alcohol taste better. I wouldn’t look to energy drinks for nutritional value. People think that they’re helping their performance. You shouldn’t look at them like Gatorade at all.”

O’Grady agreed. “People drink different products for different reasons,” he said. “I don’t see anybody thinking that coffee, sodas or energy drinks are in somehow a health benefit. In the old days, light beer was a quantum leap in the beer industry. Now different styles of beer and FABs are blurring the lines between types of alcohol. The consumers are getting much more diversified in their desires.” E-mail: maa2128@columbia.edu

## Slick Marketing Conceals Product Contents

By Sophia Fischer [sfischer@theacorn.com](mailto:sfischer@theacorn.com)

[http://www.theacorn.com/news/2007/1115/front\\_page/003.html](http://www.theacorn.com/news/2007/1115/front_page/003.html)

That energy drink your teen is so fond of may contain a potent mix of alcohol and caffeine. Using names such as Tilt, Rockstar 21, Liquid Core, Sparks and Joose, the colorful cans sold in grocery, convenience and liquor stores are marketed to children and young adults.

**Although it is illegal for minors to purchase the drinks, cashiers are sometimes confused because the alcoholic and nonalcoholic packaging is so similar and the labels are hard to read, according to Chris Albrecht, district administrator for the California Alcohol Beverage Control office in Ventura County. It is a growing problem and a law enforcement challenge, said Albrecht, who does not consider any drink containing alcohol to be an "energy drink." (1)**

**"Everyone has to understand that drinking one of these products is virtually the same as drinking a beer product," Albrecht said. "It can have a dangerous impact on driving or any other activity." (4)**

According to California law, any drink with more than one-half of 1 percent of alcohol is considered alcoholic. A standard beer contains 3 to 5 percent alcohol.

**Energy drinks contain various levels of alcohol, and Joose is one of the more potent brands. At 23½ ounces and 9.9 percent alcohol, a single can of Joose is the equivalent of three beers and eight cups of coffee, said Dan Hicks, program administrator for Straight Up Ventura County, a nonprofit organization that promotes social change regarding underage drinking among 15- to 25-year-olds. The other brands contain 6 to 7 percent alcohol. (3)**

**"Manufacturers are conveniently blurring the line of what's alcoholic and what's not," Hicks said. "Go to the sparks.com website to get a clear idea of who they're targeting." (1)**

**Teens like the drinks because the caffeine helps reduce the sluggish effects of the alcohol. But the combination of stimulant and lethargy can be lethal, said Hicks. (4)**

"That 'speedball'--going up and down at the same time--is what John Belushi died of," said Hicks, referring to the comedian who died in 1982 from an injected lethal combination of heroin and cocaine. "It's a whole new ballgame in the teen party scene."

There are about a dozen different alcoholic energy products that would not be detected by a parent or school administrator as such, according to Hicks. A recent walk by administrators through a San Diego high school during lunch revealed nine students drinking alcoholic energy drinks, he said.

"These kids were openly getting a buzz on campus," Hicks said. "We have a significantly higher number of young people drinking on campuses in Ventura County. Are energy drinks containing alcohol contributing to these statistics? We are researching that."

An ABC investigator recently arrested a store cashier for selling three cans of Sparks, an alcoholic malt beverage, to a minor. The clerk denied knowing it contained alcohol. Sparks energy drinks come in alcoholic and nonalcoholic versions.

"Every product that goes into the store, the cashier should be trained on," Albrecht said

It is up to retailers to educate their workers to know the differences between the drinks, Hicks said. Stores are required to separate the alcoholic versions from the nonalcoholic versions. Some stores, like Ralphs and Vons supermarkets in Agoura Hills, use their checkout systems to help, according to store managers.

"The scanner alerts the cashier that this is an alcoholic beverage and the cashier asks for ID," said Vons' manager Napoleon Salguero.

But it's a "mixed bag" when it comes to clerks being educated and alert to the potential problem.

"Older retailers and managers do know the difference, but younger ones don't always," Hicks said.

There have been efforts by the state Legislature to require manufacturers to improve labeling.

"Frankly, many store owners and clerks are not even aware that these 'alcopops' contain high levels of alcohol, so they are easily obtained by children and teens," said Diana Traficante, an Oak Park parent. "This is a serious matter. Think about your child knowingly or unknowingly purchasing one of these energy drinks and the effect it can have on his or her daily activities."

For more information or to report sales of alcohol to minors, call the Alcohol Beverage Control office at (805) 289-0100.

## **Energy Drinks with Alcohol Stir Fears - Parents advised to pay attention to what their teens are drinking**

By ROBIN ERB

BLADE STAFF WRITER

Article published August 13, 2007

<http://toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070813/NEWS08/70813005>

It's the fine print on the drink containers that worries people like Brenda Brake:

**Tilt: 8 percent alcohol. Sparks Plus: 7 percent alcohol. Joose: 9.9 percent alcohol.**

**“Parents will see it as an energy drink. If your youth comes in the house with a different-colored can and he's drinking it right in front of you, you're not going to pick up the can and read the ingredients,” she said. (1)**

Ms. Brake would know. A representative of Parents Helping Parents, she's assigned to working with parents whose youth are assigned to Lucas County Drug Court — in other words, kids whose crimes generally stem from their addictions.

She and others are concerned about a string of energy drinks on the market that mix high doses of caffeine — trouble enough for kids — with alcohol.

Troubling, too, is another set of numbers.

**In a survey last year by Mintel International Group, a market research firm, 31 percent of 1,903 youths 12 to 17 years old said they regularly drink energy drinks such as the nonalcoholic Full Throttle, No Fear, and Adrenaline Rush. (2)**

**That's a hefty chunk of the \$3.2 billion energy-drink industry that year.**

Michele Simon of the alcohol industry watchdog Marin Institute in San Rafael, Calif., co-authored a report earlier this year “Alcohol, Energy Drinks, and Youth: A Dangerous Mix.”

**To her, the alcohol industry is marketing energy drinks to the youngest drinkers, employing things like MySpace.com and other cyberspace tools to show young people consuming energy drinks. (1)**

**Add the alcohol to the energy drinks, she said, and it provides a young consumer an enticing “bridge” from soda pop and nonalcoholic energy drinks to alcohol mixes.(1)**

Locally, Danielle Stratton echoes the same concerns. She heads a group called Teen Institute Leaders Team, or ironically enough, TILT. It's a group that is concerned about young people's addictions. On Friday, Miss Stratton's group sent letters to Anheuser-Busch Inc., maker of the drink Tilt. They told Anheuser they weren't looking to remove the drink from shelves, just change its “furtive packaging.”

“A mere redesign of the can will alert teens, as well as parents, that your product is an alcoholic beverage,” they wrote.

In an interview with The Blade, Ms. Stratton was more blunt: “Teenagers can fool anyone by appearing to drink an energy drink.”

Anheuser probably hasn’t received the letter yet. But an interview request Friday by The Blade generated a three-sentence written response.

It noted that consumers must be 21 to drink Tilt and that Anheuser-Busch encourages “the responsible consumption of all of our products.”

“The ingredients in Tilt are clearly labeled, and these ingredients, Tilt’s formulation, and its label have been approved by the federal government,” it continued. “Anheuser-Busch is adamantly opposed to underage drinking, and no other company has done more to proactively address this issue.”

Miller Brewing, which manufactures Sparks, did not return a call from The Blade.

Johnny Carrillo first worried about the drinks, not because of numbers, but because of experience.

The probation officer assigned to drug court keeps a plastic bag in his office. Inside is an empty water bottle — a teen had used it for vodka — and a bright silver bottle, Sparks. Both had been confiscated from teens on probation.

The two containers represent the same problem: a way to sneak alcohol past unsuspecting parents. Last month, a drug court teenager was sent back to detention after he was caught drinking one of the energy drinks.

“It was 9 percent [alcohol], the one he drank,” Mr. Carrillo said.

It’s such a concern that intake personnel screening kids for drug court now routinely ask: Do you drink Sparks or any other energy drink with alcohol?

Kids sometimes don’t even consider it alcohol; say local drug and alcohol counselors as well as the Marin Institute’s Ms. Simon. Moreover, they don’t understand they’re mixing drugs too — alcohol as a depressant, caffeine as a stimulant, counselors say: **The caffeine may mask alcohol intoxication because of its energy boost, but motor skills and other functions are just as impaired by the alcohol. (4)**

Neither the outgoing nor incoming agent-in-charge of the Ohio Public Safety Department’s Toledo investigative office, nor the captain in charge of Toledo police vice unit reports any underage drinking problems associated with the energy drinks.

But the qualifier might be the word “yet,” said James L. Edwards, Sr., longtime head of Lucas

County's Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program, or UMADAOP.

Perhaps it's a good thing that Toledo lags in trends and fads, he added. "We're not always the first or with the most," he said. Perhaps, he said, the interest from young people in energy/alcohol drinks won't pick up locally. "We'll keep our fingers crossed." Still, he and others worry that the simple energy drinks are a problem too, especially for young, developing bodies and minds.

Olga Soto, supervisor of an outpatient drug and alcohol program at Connecting Point's Bancroft Street facility, said youths, especially addicts, can easily become dependent on a caffeine rush.

An admitted fan of coffee, Miss Soto argues that the energy drinks contain several times the amount of caffeine in coffee: "I also make the argument that I go to bed at a reasonable hour and I wake up feeling refreshed. These kids are staying up to 3 or 4 in the morning. There's always a concern when a child is using a drink to keep them moving or to keep them motivated," she said.

Contact Robin Erb at: [robinerb@theblade.com](mailto:robinerb@theblade.com) or 419-724-6133.

## **Anheuser-Busch Agrees to National Withdraw of All Alcoholic Energy Drinks**

### **11 States Attorneys General Say Energy Drinks Targeted Illegal Underage Drinkers**

by OhioNewsBureau | June 26, 2008 at 01:55 pm

<http://www.nowpublic.com/world/anheuser-busch-agrees-national-withdraw-all-alcoholic-energy-drinks>

**COLUMBUS, OHIO:** Six attorneys general, led by Steven Rowe of Maine, announced Thursday a settlement agreement with **Anehuser-Busch, the maker of *Tilt* and *Bud Extra*, that it will immediately discontinue the company's production, distribution and marketing of these alcohol and energy drinks, based on their investigation that showed they violated consumer and trade practice laws that made false claims regarding the energizing effects of these drinks to a population that often consisted of underage teenagers. (5)**

"Caffeine doesn't do anything to offset alcohol on motor skills," said Rowe, who led the discussion and whose office coordinated a conference call this afternoon among five other state AGs that the *OhioNewsBureau* participated in. He said today's announcement by Anheuser-Bush, headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, and listed by Fortune Magazine as one of America's Most Admired Companies for 2008, that it will discontinue two of its popular pre-mixed alcoholic energy drinks avoids a battle in court and showed the company's leadership, something he said he hopes the dozen or more other producers of such drinks will also do.

In a statement, Anheuser-Busch said that in cooperation with the states, is will reformulate *Bud Extra* and *Tilt* products to remove the caffeine and guarana from them.

In a statement about the settlement announced today by Anheuser-Busch and carried CNNMONEY.com, the company said the findings by the states attorney generals "contains no findings that Anheuser-Busch engaged in unlawful behavior or advertised to youth, and it points to no documents stating that Anheuser did so."

Rowe said the company is free to reformulate the drinks but they would be monitored closely.

Ohio Attorney General Nancy Rogers, who is new to the post having served 14 years as a university administrator, seven of which were as the Dean of The Ohio State University Law School, and who was recently appointed by Gov. Ted Strickland to it in the wake of sexual scandals that forced Marc Dann, elected by Ohioans to it in 2006, **said the "combination of high caffeine with alcohol appeals to young people...who often form the wrong belief that the caffeine in the drinks will counteract the intoxicating effects of the alcohol," a sales pitch she said expressed and implied "false or misleading health-related statements about the energizing effects of the beverages." (2)**

Rogers said in a media release that Ohio will continue to investigate alcoholic energy drinks manufactured by other companies and will be working with state and federal officials to encourage further research and regulation in relation to these products.

## **COOL, CATCHY MARKETING SLOGANS TURNED DRINKS INTO "RECIPE FOR DISASTER"**

Other on the conference call, including Maryland AG Douglas Gansler, Arizona AG Terry Goddard, Idaho AG Lawrence Wasden and Connecticut AG Richard Blumenthal, took their turn commenting on the agreement that was triggered by marketing claims coupled with published research about the dangers of these products, that then led to a multi-state investigation into the content and marketing of Anheuser-Bush products that fell under the auspices of state consumer protection and trade practice statutes. **The claims pursued by these Attorney Generals and those of five other states (California, Illinois, Iowa, New Mexico and New York) not on today's call related to the false advertising that the AGs said were targeted more to underage teenage drinks that also appealed to drinkers of legal age. (2)**

While Rowe of Maine said the drinks were a “recipe for disaster” that often lead to sexual assault and physical injury, Gansler of Maryland said some of the popular slogans used to sell the product – “You can sleep when you’re 30,” “You’ll last longer than a Hollywood Marriage,” and “Be the life of the after party” – when coupled with promotional giveaways like surfboards, skateboards and music downloads were too much for a teenager of 13 or 14 to resist. He said that when the caffeine wore off, kids were still “stone drunk.”

To reach this reporter at OhioNewsBureau with story ideas or leads, send an email to **ohionews bureau@gmail.com**

## ERRATIC HEART RATES

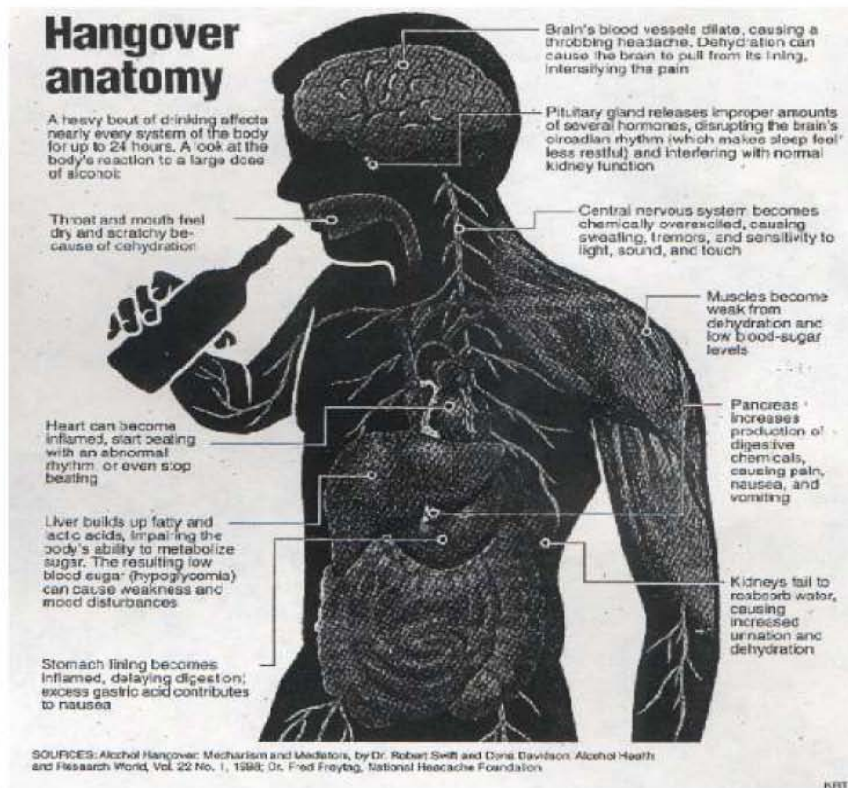
A lot of people are unusually sensitive to caffeine and other stimulants. High levels of stimulants like caffeine can boost their heart rate and blood pressure to dangerous levels. They may never have tried energy drinks before being exposed to them in nightclubs, so they have no idea how these drinks **alone** will affect them. When you add alcohol to the mix, the combination can be that much more dangerous. Combining strong stimulants with a heavy depressant can lead to serious problems. It sends mixed messages to the central nervous system, and can even lead to cardiopulmonary or cardiovascular failure.

## ALTERED PERCEPTION

A study in Brazil found that consumption of alcohol combined with the energy drink Red Bull significantly reduced the perception of symptoms such as headache, weakness, dry mouth and impairment of motor control. But while the energy drink may have helped block the **perception** of symptoms, it didn't do anything to stop these symptoms. Participants still suffered from reduced motor coordination and visual reaction time. The stimulants simply made them **feel** more alert and awake. To put it bluntly, they were drunk, but they didn't know they were drunk!

Stimulants don't help people to sober up.

Alcohol leaves the body of virtually every drinker at a constant rate of approximately 0.015 percent of blood alcohol content per hour. So a person with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.015 would be sober in an hour, while a person with a BAC that is ten times that high would require ten hours before they are completely sober. There are no stimulants, exercises or magic formulas to speed up the rate at which your organs are able to excrete alcohol.



Above document: Community Drug Alter (NIDH) Alcohol Hangover: Mechanisms and Mediators by Dr. Robert Swift and Diane Davidson online at <http://67.55.35.181/pdfs/alcoholenergy.pdf> (4)

## **Alumni Mix Alcohol, Energy Drink, I.V. to Create ‘Catalyst’**

BY GIBRAN MACIEL, STAFF WRITER, ISSUE 100 / VOLUME 86

<http://www.dailynews.com/article.php?a=11346>

Two grads have put their UCSB education to use by mixing and marketing a new alcohol energy drink dubbed Catalyst. Ryan Davies and Jeff Smith, 2001 alumni who majored in business economics, are currently involved in selling, marketing and distributing their new product, which can be purchased in packs of four for \$7.99. Among several other stores located throughout California, the Study Hall bar at 6543 Pardall Road and Keg-n-Bottle, located at 915 Embarcadero Del Mar both sell the beverage.

Shortly after graduating from UCSB, Smith and Davies said they started developing the drink by experimenting with ingredients such as caffeine, taurine and L-carnitine, all of which are commonly found in energy drinks. Then, they added vodka. **Davies said the idea to create and market an alcohol energy drink came from their preference for mixing alcohol. (4)**

**Vodka was soon discounted as an ingredient option, as it was too expensive; Davies said he and Smith wanted college students to be able to purchase the drink for a low cost. (1)**

After months of experimentation, Davies said, the ingredients for Catalyst were refined into a malt liquor and energy formula. The content of the drink is six percent alcohol.

“It looks and tastes like sake,” said Davies.

After finalizing the ingredients for Catalyst, Davies said the formula was then sent to a taste company to change the drink’s flavor. A third party bottling company packages the product, Davies said, allowing the company to focus on marketing and distributing.

Catalyst can currently be found in San Diego, Orange County, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and Fresno, Davies said.

More information about the drink is available at [www.drinkcatalyst.com](http://www.drinkcatalyst.com).

## Caffeine and Energy Boosting Drugs: Energy Drinks

Brown University Health Education . 2008. Online:

[http://www.brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Health\\_Services/Health\\_Education/atod/energydrinks.htm](http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/atod/energydrinks.htm)

### What are energy drinks?

Energy drinks are beverages like Red Bull, Venom, Adrenaline Rush, 180, ISO Sprint, and Whoopass, which contain large doses of caffeine and other legal stimulants like guarana and ginseng. Energy drinks may contain as much as 80 mg of caffeine, the equivalent of a cup of coffee. Compared to the 37 mg. of caffeine in a Mountain Dew, or the 23 mg. in a Coca-Cola Classic, that's a big punch. These drinks are marketed to people under 30, especially to college students, and are widely available both on and off campus.

### Are there short-term dangers to drinking energy drinks?

Individual responses to caffeine vary, and these drinks should be treated carefully because of how powerful they are. **Energy drinks' stimulating properties can boost the heart rate and blood pressure (sometimes to the point of palpitations), dehydrate the body, and, like other stimulants, prevents sleep. (4)**

Energy drinks should not be used while exercising as the combination of fluid loss from sweating and the diuretic quality of the caffeine can leave the user severely dehydrated.

Know what you're drinking. Energy drinks are not necessarily bad for you, but they shouldn't be seen as "natural alternatives" either. **Some of the claims they make like "improved performance and concentration" can be misleading. (4)** If you think of them as highly-caffeinated drinks, you'll have a more accurate picture of what they are and how they affect you. You wouldn't use Mountain Dew as a sports drink. And a drink like Red Bull and vodka is more like strong coffee and whisky than anything else.

### What happens when energy drinks are combined with alcohol?

Energy drinks are also used as mixers with alcohol. This combination carries a number of dangers:

- **Since energy drinks are stimulants and alcohol is a depressant, the combination of effects may be dangerous. The stimulant effects can mask how intoxicated you are and prevent you from realizing how much alcohol you have consumed. Fatigue is one of the ways the body normally tells someone that they've had enough to drink.**
- **The stimulant effect can give the person the impression they aren't impaired. No matter how alert you feel, your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is the same as it would be without the energy drink. Once the stimulant effect wears off, the depressant effects of the alcohol will remain and could cause vomiting in your sleep or respiratory depression.**

- **Both energy drinks and alcohol are very dehydrating (the caffeine in energy drinks is a diuretic). Dehydration can hinder your body's ability to metabolize alcohol and will increase the toxicity, and therefore the hangover, the next day. (4)**

**Alcohol And Energy Drinks: A Dangerous Mix - Drinking Both At Once Getting More Popular On Campuses; CBS, NEW YORK, Nov. 7, 2007**

On line: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/11/07/earlyshow/health/main3464271.shtml>

Research out this week reveals the dangers of mixing alcohol with popular energy drinks such as Red Bull and Adrenaline Rush.

It's a phenomenon sweeping college campuses, and there are even Web sites dedicated to rating the various combinations.

**Dr. Mary Claire O'Brien, an emergency room physician and associate professor of emergency medicine at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C., is lead author of the study. On *The Early Show* Wednesday, she explained to co-anchor Julie Chen that drinking alcoholic beverages and energy drinks at the same time can in essence delay the perceived effects of the alcohol, misleading people into thinking they're not as affected by it as they really are, in turn endangering their bodies and making risky behavior more likely. (4)**

The study included some 4,000 college students from 10 schools.

O'Brien told Chen, "What we know from speaking with college students and from looking at Web sites is that they add energy drinks to alcohol in order to be able to drink more alcohol without passing out, and to party longer. ... I think what they want to do is drink more. That's what our research suggests.

"There is a buzz associated with the high dose of caffeine and the alcohol. One of the medical problems that occurs immediately after that, as the caffeine wears off, the big dose of alcohol kicks in."

"In our study, one in four college drinkers is mixing alcohol with energy drinks. ... We found that they did it in order to be able to drink more without passing out. Indeed, there is a much greater incidence of drunkenness and a much greater incidence of heavy episodic drinking when students mix alcohol with energy drinks.

**"But, the real thing we were interested in was the association with serious, alcohol-related consequences, like riding with a drunken driver or being hurt or injured or needing medical treatment. And indeed, all those things were twice as likely among students who mixed alcohol with energy drinks." (4)**

O'Brien recalled taking care of a student "a couple years ago who drank enough alcohol mixed with energy drinks to basically be comatose when he arrived in the emergency department.

"And I think it's important to understand why I'm passionate about this subject. I'm a practicing emergency physician. For 20 years, I've been taking care of critically ill and injured patients -- 2.8 million college students drive drunk every year, and a good number of them end up in my emergency department.

"One of the things I have to do for a living is walk into the room and tell the parents that the student's never coming home again, and I'm a mom, so I'm pretty worked up about alcohol-related injuries."

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**Caffeinated Cocktails: Get wired, Get drunk, Get injured**  
**Politics, Policy & Public Health – APHA 135<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Expo**  
November 3-7, 2007, Washington, DC APHA Scientific Session and Event Listing  
On line: [http://apha.confex.com/apha/135am/techprogram/paper\\_166629.htm](http://apha.confex.com/apha/135am/techprogram/paper_166629.htm)

**Mary Claire O'Brien, MD**, Department of Emergency Medicine, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, One Medical Center Blvd, Winston-Salem, NC 27157, (336) 716-4625, [mobrien@wfubmc.edu](mailto:mobrien@wfubmc.edu), Thomas McCoy, MS, Department of Biostatistical Science, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Medical Center Blvd., Winston-Salem, NC 27157, and Scott Rhodes, PhD, MPH, CHES, Div of Public Health Sciences/Dept of Social Sciences & Health Policy, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, 2000 W. 1st Street, Winston-Salem, NC 27157-1063.

**OBJECTIVES:** Mixing alcohol with energy drinks is popular on college campuses. Limited research suggests that energy drink consumption lessens subjective intoxication in persons who have also consumed alcohol, but does not alter motor coordination or visual reaction times. This study examines the relationship between energy drink use, high-risk drinking behavior, and alcohol-related consequences.

**METHODS:** In Fall 2006, web based surveys were administered to stratified random samples of 4,275 college students from ten NC universities. Students answered questions regarding alcohol use, its consequences, and other health risk behaviors. Data were analyzed using multiple clustered logistic regression. Adjusted odds ratios (AOR) and 95% confidence intervals were calculated for significant predictors ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**RESULTS:** 697 students (16%) reported energy drink consumption. Students who were male ( $p < .001$ ), White ( $p = .039$ ), and Greek society members/pledges ( $p < .001$ ) were more likely to consume energy drinks. In multivariable analyses, energy drink consumption was associated with heavy episodic drinking (AOR=8.2;  $p < .001$ ) and getting drunk at least once per week (AOR=5.5;  $p < .001$ ). Students who mixed alcohol and energy drinks were more likely to experience alcohol-related consequences, measured by 4 consequences subscales ( $p < .001$ ). Point estimates of prevalence were higher for ED consumers for all 41 individual alcohol-related consequences. **Energy drink consumption was associated with increased prevalence of drug use, including non-prescription use of stimulants (4)** ( $p < .001$ ).

**CONCLUSIONS:** Energy drinks are heavily marketed to college students. College students who mix alcohol with energy drinks are at increased risk for alcohol-related injuries. Further research is necessary to understand this association and to develop targeted interventions to reduce injury risk. (4)

**Study Shows Energy Drink “Cocktails” Lead to Increased Injury Risk  
Wake Forest University Medical Center, For Immediate Release 11/05/2007  
New Alcoholic Energy Drink Attacked By States**

The Huffington Post, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/09/17/new-alcoholic-energy-drin\\_n\\_127211.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/09/17/new-alcoholic-energy-drin_n_127211.html)

EMILY FREDRIX | September 17, 2008 06:41 PM EST |

**MILWAUKEE — Twenty-five states asked beverage maker MillerCoors LLC on Wednesday to abandon plans for a new caffeine-infused alcoholic energy drink. (5)**

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said in a statement that the Sparks Red drink is a "recipe for disaster" because adding caffeine to alcoholic beverages reduces drinkers' sense of intoxication.

Blumenthal, New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo and the other attorneys general say young drinkers are especially vulnerable because of their limited judgment and risky behaviors in driving and other activities. They urged MillerCoors to abandon plans for the product and said they would consider other steps \_ hinting at a potential lawsuit \_ if necessary.

MillerCoors spokesman Julian Green said the company still plans to release the drink on Oct. 1. He said the federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, or TTB, has approved all formulas and labeling for Sparks.

"We will continue to work with the TTB to insure that marketing, labeling and formulation continues to meet all guidelines," he said.

The company said it was reviewing the letter and looked forward to talking with the attorneys general about it.

Attorneys general and advocacy groups have long been targeting MillerCoors, a joint venture between SABMiller's U.S. unit and Molson Coors Brewing Co., and the nation's largest brewer, Anheuser-Busch Cos. Inc., in connection with the making and marketing of such drinks. They say these drinks are targeting teenagers and young drinkers who are already drawn to highly caffeinated drinks like Red Bull.

Last week the Center for Science in the Public Interest said it sued MillerCoors to stop the brewer from selling Sparks, saying it's going after teenagers with the drink.

On Wednesday, the latest group, which also includes California, Ohio, Illinois and Vermont, sent MillerCoors Chief Executive Leo Kiely a letter asking the brewer to stop its plans for Sparks Red.

"MillerCoors' decision to introduce Sparks Red defies increasing undeniable evidence from medical and public health professionals about the dangers of mixing alcohol with stimulants found in energy drinks," the letter said.

**In announcing its lawsuit last week, the CSPI cited a 2007 study that found that drinkers of caffeinated alcoholic drinks are more likely to binge drink and ride with an intoxicated driver, among other dangers. (4)**

The 25 attorneys general said the new drink will contain as much as 8 percent alcohol by volume, and noted that was higher than other alcoholic energy drinks. According to MillerCoors' Web site, current versions of Sparks have between 6 percent and 7 percent alcohol by volume. By comparison, MillerCoors' beers Miller High Life and Coors contain just under 5 percent alcohol by volume, according to the site.

The CSPI's lawsuit asks the Superior Court of the District of Columbia to stop MillerCoors from selling the drink. It said it is illegal to use caffeine, guarana, ginseng and taurine in alcoholic beverages. All of those ingredients are in Sparks, MillerCoors spokesman Pete Marino said, adding that he believed they were all in Sparks Red as well.

CSPI said the Food and Drug Administration has given "only very narrow approval" for caffeine and guarana \_ with no allowance for alcoholic drinks \_ and no approval for ginseng in any food or beverage. Taurine, which is often found in energy drinks, is a derivative of an amino acid.

St. Louis-based Anheuser-Busch said in June it would reformulate its brands "Tilt" and "Bud Extra" to remove the stimulants they contain as part of a settlement with 11 attorneys general.

In February the attorneys general subpoenaed documents from Anheuser-Busch related to its marketing efforts for the alcoholic energy drinks. Anheuser-Busch also agreed to pay \$200,000 to the states that investigated its practices.

Anheuser-Busch strongly disputed the allegation that its marketing for the caffeinated alcoholic drinks targets those under the legal drinking age.

## **New Alcoholic Energy Drink Attacked By States**

Emily Fredrix. September 17, 2008. Online:

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/09/17/new-alcoholic-energy-drin\\_n\\_127211.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/09/17/new-alcoholic-energy-drin_n_127211.html)

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## **Miller-Coors To Halt Stimulant-Spiked Alcoholic Drinks**

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal Department of Consumer Protection Commissioner Jerry Farrell, Jr. 2008. Online: <http://www.ct.gov/ag/cwp/view.asp?A=2341&Q=430104&pp=12&n=1>

December 18, 2008

**In an agreement with Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) Commissioner Jerry Farrell, Jr., Miller-Coors will stop producing stimulant-spiked alcoholic drinks, including its Sparks line of beverages, the nation's best-selling energy alcoholic drink. (5)**

In the national agreement announced today by Blumenthal and Farrell, the company will pay Connecticut \$30,000 for its investigative and legal costs. Miller-Coors reached the \$550,000 settlement with 13 states and the city of San Francisco.

**Under the agreement, Miller-Coors will withdraw and reformulate its Sparks beverages, including Sparks Original, Sparks Light, Sparks Plus and the planned Sparks Red, to remove caffeine, guarana or other stimulants. (5)** The company also agreed to not market the drinks to underage drinkers, discontinue the Sparks website in its current form, cease using certain words, symbols and images in its advertising and end its sponsorship of air guitarist William Ocean. Ocean incorporates Sparks into his performances, including a back flip in which he crushes a can of the beverage.

Blumenthal said, "Sparks is an insidious and insane drink that deservedly now is down the drain -- like all stimulant-spiked alcoholic drinks should be. Beverages like Sparks are a witch's brew of alcohol and caffeine, energizing drunks and encouraging dangerous, even deadly behavior. Common sense says a drink impairing judgment while conferring excess energy is a very bad idea. Studies show that these drinks lead to binge drinking, car crashes, sexual assaults and other risky behavior. They impair reactions and reasoning, but instill the illusion of alertness and energy.

"Marketing magnified Sparks' dangers by using symbols like lightning bolts and batteries and buzzwords like 'powered' and 'ignited' in pandering to young drinkers, along with skateboards and snowboards, and giveaways for free movie downloads. The company hugely hyped Sparks, glorifying it as a recipe for tireless partying and endless, energized inebriation. Its use of images such as orange tongues seemed to tout outlandish and over the top conduct. The viral Internet marketing of misleading health claims targeted college students. Some marketing -- providing free Sparks without adequately assuring drinkers were 21 -- was downright irresponsible and reprehensible.

"Come the New Year, Sparks will go the way of 2008 -- just history. **This agreement pulls caffeinated alcoholic products from shelves and prohibits the company from making energy alcoholic drinks. We will carry our campaign to companies -- stopping these unconscionable concoctions that make drinkers hammered and hopped up at the same time.**" (5)

Blumenthal added, "My state's investigation is continuing and our coalition of states will seek similar bans on energy alcoholic drinks from other manufacturers, exploring all options, including possible legal action. I urge other breweries and distillers to follow Miller-Coors' lead by voluntarily withdrawing and forswearing these unsafe beverages. We need to change the culture as well as the drinks and marketing."

Farrell, who serves as chairman of the Connecticut Liquor Control Board, said, "The combination of alcohol and stimulants such as caffeine raises health and safety concerns. Miller-Coors' agreement to stop producing stimulant-spiked alcohol drinks is the responsible thing to do and will help in reducing the number of alcohol-related automobile fatalities -- 95 such deaths in 2007 -- that occur every year in Connecticut."

The agreement requires Miller-Coors to:

- Reformulate Sparks products to remove stimulants by January 10, 2009;
- Remove from Sparks marketing any references to mixing the drinks with caffeinated or stimulant-laced beverages, as well as plus and minus signs, batteries, on/off switches, elevators, lightning bolts and snowboards, and the words "powered and "ignited";
- Better ensure only those over 21 are served Sparks at promotional events;
- Not promote on social networking and other websites private Sparks parties and events at unlicensed locations attended by people under 21;
- Inform retailers that Sparks no longer contains stimulants and encourage them to display the product separately from non-alcoholic energy drinks.

Blumenthal commended Miller-Coors for the agreement. The company denies that it marketed Sparks to underage drinkers. Other states participating in the agreement are Arizona, California, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Ohio and Oklahoma.

**The agreement comes six months after Anheuser-Busch Companies reached a similar agreement with Connecticut and 10 other states to withdraw its "Tilt" and "Bud Extra" alcoholic energy drinks. Under the agreement, the company may reformulate the drinks as long as they contain no stimulants. (5)**

## **Energy Drinks with Alcohol Aimed at Youths**

Teresa Rochester. Ventura County Star. Saturday, March 15, 2008. Online:  
<http://www.venturacountystar.com/news/2008/mar/15/energy-drinks-with-alcohol-aimed-at-youths/?printer=1/>

The images, culled from social networking sites, flashed on a screen: young people laughing, partying, clutching colorful cans of drinks with names like Sparks, Joose and Tilt.

The images formed a cautionary tale told by the Ventura County's Sheriff's Department, behavioral health workers and a national expert to a room full of educators, elected officials and law enforcement from throughout the county.

**Energy drinks with alcohol are dangerous; they are targeted at young people and are hard to distinguish from their nonalcoholic counterparts, the speakers said at a conference Friday morning at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. (1), (2)**

The conference was designed to raise awareness of the beverages, which often are easily obtained by young people, and to outline strategies for dealing with the issue, including enforcement, education and policy. "There is a lot of work to be done to ensure the health and safety of the community," Thousand Oaks Mayor Jacqui Irwin said.

Ventura County Limits, a community partnership for "responsible alcohol policies and practices," hosted the conference. **The drinks, with their sleek graphics, are referred to as a "speedball in a can," cost less than energy drinks without alcohol and are marketed on Web sites designed to appeal to young people, Ventura County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Geoff Dean told the audience. "They are intentionally marketing these to a certain segment," Dean said. (1)**

Three cans of one of the beverages equals five shots of whiskey and contains the caffeine of 15 Diet Pepsi's, Dean said.

**The stimulant of the energy drinks can mask how intoxicated a person is and prevent them from realizing how much alcohol they have consumed, according to Ventura County Limits. The stimulant effect can also make a person not realize they are drunk. Both energy drinks and alcohol cause dehydration. (4)** Consuming energy drinks that contain alcohol leads to an increased risk of injury, Dean said. The majority of sexual assaults, 70 percent, involve a victim or a suspect who is intoxicated, he said.

In discussing what can be done to address the drinks, officials recommended education directed at parents, teachers, government and law enforcement. "Everything we have here, we'll give you," Dean said, while discussing educating people about the drinks. "We'll talk to your teachers. We'll talk to your parents. We just want to get the information out there."

Encouraging stores to voluntarily refrain from selling the drinks was recommended along with enforcement, such as a recent sting targeting stores selling alcohol energy drinks to minors. The

Sheriff's Department was recently successful in getting one major grocery chain to separate alcohol energy drinks from nonalcoholic energy drinks.

Those in attendance, were also encouraged to support proposed state laws, which would call for the drinks to be taxed at a higher prices and require better labeling. **James Mosher, director of the Center for the Study of Law Enforcement Policy, called alcohol energy drinks "a highly dangerous product." (4)**

"I do believe we should be establishing a very ambitious goal," Mosher said. "And that's getting it off the market." Mario Contini, superintendent of the Conejo Valley Unified School District, said he would take up the issue with the district's school principals and present it to the Board of Education. "This is something we are going to educate and intervene in some ways to prevent this issue from having adverse effects on children," he said.

For more information, visit <http://www.venturacountylimits.org>.

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14. Energy drinks with alcohol aimed at youths; Teresa Rochester-Ventura County Star Saturday, March 15, 2008.  
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## Reference Sheet for Dangers of Alcoholic Energy Drinks

- Whereas 1, Non-alcoholic energy drinks are a multi-billion dollar industry. The packaging of alcoholic energy drinks mimics non-alcoholic energy drinks, which particularly appeal to youth; and  
**Pages 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 17, 29**
- Whereas 2, Alcoholic drinks with caffeine appeal to young people who consume caffeinated non-alcoholic energy drinks. Thirty-one percent of 12 to 17 year-; and  
**Pages 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 14, 15, 29**
- Whereas 3, Alcoholic energy drinks are prepackaged beverages containing alcohol, which is a depressant, and stimulants such as caffeine and guarana; and  
**Pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 26**
- Whereas 4, Adding stimulants to alcohol reduces a drinker's perception of intoxication and promotes the delusion of drinking and functioning without impairment; and  
**Pages 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 26, 29, 30**
- Whereas 5, In an agreement with a coalition of State Attorneys General, Anheuser-Busch and Miller/Coors have discontinued distribution of alcoholic energy drinks. However, other companies continue to produce these beverages; and therefore be it  
**Pages 3, 5, 14, 25, 28, 30**
- Resolved, National PTA and its constituent organizations educate parents, students, administrators, teachers and community members about the dangers of consuming alcoholic energy drinks; and be it further
- Resolved, National PTA and its constituent organizations seek legislation requiring that alcoholic energy drink manufacturers provide prominent alcohol content percentage on the label, as well as health and safety warnings indicating the dangers of combining alcohol with caffeinated beverages.