

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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ABC DIRECTOR PLEASSED THAT R.J. REYNOLDS STOPS 'DRINKS ON US' CAMPAIGN

Director Jerry Jolly says campaign was irresponsible

Sacramento – California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Director Jerry Jolly today said he was pleased that tobacco maker R.J. Reynolds has halted its “Drinks on Us” birthday promotion that encouraged excessive drinking. The campaign attempted to attract young adults to buy Camel cigarettes by sending free coasters with drink recipes on them. Some of the coasters contained messages promoting heavy drinking.

Jolly said any campaign that promotes heavy drinking among young adults and potentially underage youth does not help society fix a serious problem. “California statistics show the number of alcohol-related traffic deaths has risen the last six years. Campaigns like “Drinks on Us” do nothing to help reverse that trend,” he said.

According to the California Highway Patrol, last year there were over 1300 alcohol-related fatal crashes in California that killed over 1400 people. 578 of those crashes involved young people aged 21 – 34. “The last thing we need is companies marketing excessive drinking to younger adults,” Jolly said. “The facts clearly show too many young people are dying on the highways because they or someone else got behind the wheel after drinking too much.”

R.J. Reynolds was asked to end the promotion in a November 21, 2005 letter from Attorneys General in three states. The letter cited the serious public health dangers posed by underage and excessive drinking, as well as “considerable scientific evidence that the combined use of cigarettes and alcohol presents health risks over and above the risks posed by smoking alone.”

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