

COMMITTEE REPORT

HOUSE

FURTHER:

(11)

3/16/53

Date: 3/24/53

Mr. Speaker:

The Committee on FINANCE has had HB 302

An Act increasing the liquor tax; and providing for an effective date.

under consideration and reports it back as follows:

do pass do not pass

do pass with attached amendments(s)

replace with CS for _____

same title
 new title

and recommends _____

AND attaches a "Letter of Intent"

New Fiscal Note

reports it back without recommendation

Zero Fiscal Note Attached

referred to the _____

Committee

MEMBERS SIGNING
DO PASS

MEMBERS HAVING
OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

Chairman
CHAIRMAN

Introduced: 2/15/83
Referred: State Affairs
and Finance

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY / MS AND LISKA

2

HOUSE BILL NO. 202

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

THIRTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5

A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act increasing the liquor tax; and providing for
7 an effective date."

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

9 * Section 1. AS 43.60.010(a) is amended to read:

10 (a) Every brewer, distiller, bottler, jobber, retailer, whole-
11 saler, or manufacturer who sells alcoholic beverages [INTOXICATING
12 LIQUORS] in the state or who consigns shipments of alcoholic beverages
13 [INTOXICATING LIQUORS] into the state, whether or not the alcoholic
14 beverages [LIQUORS] are brewed, distilled, bottled, or manufactured in
15 the state, shall pay on all malt beverages (alcoholic content of one
16 percent or more by volume), wines, and hard or distilled alcoholic
17 beverages [LIQUORS], the following taxes: (1) malt beverages at the
18 rate of 32-1/2 [25] cents a gallon or fraction of a gallon; (2) wine
19 or other beverages [LIQUOR] of 21 percent alcohol by volume or less,
20 at the rate of \$1 [60 CENTS] a gallon or fraction of a gallon; and (3)
21 other beverages [LIQUORS] having a content of more than 21 percent
22 alcohol by volume at the rate of \$5.75 [\$4] a gallon.

23 * Sec. 2. The increase in taxes under sec. 1 of this Act takes effect
24 on the first day of the month after the month in which this Act takes
25 effect.

26 * Sec. 3. To be consistent, wherever in AS 43.60 the phrases "intoxi-
27 cating liquor" or "intoxicating liquors" appear, the revisor of statutes
28 shall substitute "alcoholic beverage" or "alcoholic beverages".

29 * Sec. 4. This Act takes effect immediately in accordance with

1 AS 01.10.070(c).

STATE OF ALASKA
PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF FISCAL IMPACT

RECEIVED
MAR 1 1983

Bill No: HB 202 Date on Bill: 2/15/83
Title: An act increasing the liquor tax.
Sponsor: Adams
Requestor: House State Affairs

1. Estimated fiscal impacts on:

a. Expenditures:

(Thousands of Dollars)

	FY 83	FY 84	FY 85	FY 86
Capital				
Operating				
Total				

b. Revenues:

Revenue	-0-	2.1 mill	3.9 mill	
---------	-----	----------	----------	--

2. Source of funds to offset fiscal impact of bill:

3. Assumptions:

The analysis assumes the new tax rates become effective July 1, 1983.

4. Disclaimer:

This statement has not been reviewed by the OMB in the Office of the Governor. It therefore does not represent the final estimate of fiscal impact.

Prepared By: Maria Belafante Phone: 465-2700
Division: Comm. Office Date: 2/28/83
Approved by Commissioner: Robert E. Healy Date: 2/28/83
Department: Revenue

5. Distribution:

- Original to Legislative Finance
- Copy to OMB
- Copy to Sponsor
- Copy to Requestor

2/15/83



Official Business

Alaska State Legislature

House of Representatives

Al Adams
Chairman
Committee on Finance

WHILE IN SESSION
Pouch V.
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811
(907) 465-3706

OUT OF SESSION
P.O. Box 333
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752
(907) 442-3320

1024 W. 6th
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907) 274-0615

March 2, 1983

MEMORANDUM

TO: Representative Mitch Abood, Chairman
House State Affairs

FROM: Representative Al Adams

SUBJECT: House Bill 202 - Increasing the Liquor Tax

I appreciate your prompt scheduling of House Bill 202 and wanted to take this opportunity to provide you with a few explanatory details.

HB 202 increases the state liquor tax, which has not been raised since 1964, as follows:

- malt beverages from 25¢ per gallon to 32½¢ (a 30% increase amounting to approximately a 4¢ increase per six pack of beer);
- wine from 60¢ to \$1.00 (a 66% increase which will amount to approximately 32¢ per three liter of bottle of wine); and
- hard liquor from \$4.00 per gallon to \$5.75 (a 44% increase amounting to about 23¢ on a half liter of whiskey).

According to the Department of Revenue, the additional taxes generated from this legislation is estimated at \$2,100,000 in FY 84 and \$3,900,000 in FY 85, resulting in total revenues of \$14,600,000 and \$16,900,000 respectively.

STATE OF ALASKA
PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF FISCAL IMPACT

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(Thousands of Dollars)

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Prepared By: Mary Belfield Phone: 465-2300
 Division: Comm. Office Date: 2/28/83
 Approved by Commissioner: Robert L. Hart Date: 2/28/83
 Department: Revenue

5. Distribution:

Original to Legislative Finance
 Copy to OMB
Copy to Sponsor
 Copy to Requestor

2/15/83

General Fund Unrestricted Revenues

In Thousands of Current Dollars

	FY 1982 Actual January	FY 1983 Estimate January	FY 1984 Estimate January	FY 1985 Estimate January
<u>Taxes</u>				
<u>Income</u>				
Corporate-General	34,800	-0-	-0-	-0-
Corporate-Petroleum	668,900	-0-	-0-	-0-
Corporate (1)	-0-	235,000	272,000	295,000
<u>Gross Receipts</u>				
Alaska Business License	5,500	5,800	6,000	6,300
Fish-Canned Salmon	8,600	5,000	5,000	5,000
Fish-Shorebased	8,700	9,000	9,000	9,000
Fish-Floating	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500
Seafood Marketing (2)	-0-	1,000	1,000	1,000
Salmon Enhancement	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400
Insurance Companies	12,500	14,500	17,000	20,000
Electric and Telephone Co-ops	1,200	1,300	1,300	1,300
Mining License Tax	200	200	200	300
<u>Severance</u>				
Oil & Gas Production(3)(4)	1,581,100	1,528,800	1,197,300	1,219,700
Oil & Gas Conservation	600	800	700	700
<u>Property</u>				
Oil & Gas(5)(6)	142,700	148,600	153,200	158,000
<u>Sale/Use</u>				
Alcoholic Beverages	9,000	12,000	12,500	13,000
Fuel Taxes-Aviation	6,300	5,100	5,400	5,500
Fuel Taxes-Highway	20,300	21,000	22,000	23,000
Fuel Taxes-Marine	3,700	3,800	4,000	4,200
Tobacco Products	1,900	2,000	2,000	2,000
<u>Other</u>				
Estate	300	500	500	500
Total Taxes	2,514,200	2,002,300	1,717,000	1,772,400
<u>Licenses & Permits</u>				
Business	10,800	11,000	12,000	12,500
Non-Business	13,000	13,000	13,500	14,000
Total Licenses & Permits	23,800	24,000	25,500	26,500
<u>Intergovernmental Receipts</u>				
Federal Shared Revenues(7)(8)(9)	21,700	26,600	10,000	10,000
<u>State Resource Revenue</u>				
<u>Sale/Use</u>				
Bonus Sales(7)(10)(11)	5,000	26,100	-0-	-0-
Investment Earnings(12)	324,700	300,000	100,000	100,000
Rents(7)(10)(11)	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000
Royalties(4)(7)(13)	1,157,300	1,119,400	883,500	912,000
Sale of State Property	5,200	5,500	5,500	5,500
Gravel, Timber, etc.(14)	1,200	5,500	2,000	2,000

STATE OF ALASKA
FISCAL NOTE

Rec'd 5-9-83
H7
Revision Date , 1983

I. REQUEST

Bill/Resolution No: 5 CSHB 202 (Jud)
Title: Increasing liquor tax.
Sponsor: Judiciary Committee
Requestor: Judiciary Committee

II. FISCAL DETAIL

Agency Affected: Revenue
Program Category Affected:
BRU, Program of Subprogram(s) Affected:

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY 83	FY 84	FY 85	FY 86	FY 87	FY 88
OPERATING						
100 PERSONAL SERVICES	-	-	-	-	-	-
200 TRAVEL	-	-	-	-	-	-
300 CONTRACTUAL	-	-	-	-	-	-
400 COMMODITIES	-	-	-	-	-	-
500 EQUIPMENT	-	-	-	-	-	-
600 LANDS & STRUCTURES	-	-	-	-	-	-
700 GRANTS, CLAIMS, ETC.	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL OPERATING	-	-	-	-	-	-
CAPITAL	-	-	-	-	-	-
REVENUE	-	-	-	-	-	-

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND	-	+2000	+3750	+5100	+5300	+5600
FEDERAL FUNDS	-	-	-	-	-	-
OTHER (Specify Source)	-	-	-	-	-	-

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	-	-	-	-	-	-
PART-TIME	-	-	-	-	-	-
TEMPORARY	-	-	-	-	-	-

III. SOURCE OF FUNDS TO OFFSET FISCAL IMPACT OF BILL:

OFFICE OF
MANAGEMENT & BUDGET
MAY 6 1983

IV. ANALYSIS: Attach a separate page for any Analysis.

BUDGET REVIEW

Prepared By: Vincent D. Wright
Division: Revenue - Research

Phone: 465-2174
Date: 4/28/83

Approved by Commissioner: J. Donohue
Department: Revenue

Date: 5/6/83

Distribution:

- Original to Legislative Finance
- Copy to Office of Management and Budget (for Legislature introduced bills)
- Copy to Department (for Governor introduced bills)
- Copy to Sponsor
- Copy to Requestor (if different from Sponsor)

Offered: 4/27/83
Referred: Finance

Original sponsors: Adams and Liska

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

2

SENATE CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 202(Judiciary)

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

THIRTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

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A BILL

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7 an effective date."

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(a) Every brewer, distiller, bottler, jobber, retailer, whole-

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saler, or manufacturer who sells alcoholic beverages [INTOXICATING

12

LIQUORS] in the state or who consigns shipments of alcoholic beverages

13

[INTOXICATING LIQUORS] into the state, whether or not the alcoholic

14

beverages [LIQUORS] are brewed, distilled, bottled, or manufactured in

15

the state, shall pay on all malt beverages (alcoholic content of one

16

percent or more by volume), wines, and hard or distilled alcoholic

17

beverages [LIQUORS], the following taxes: (1) malt beverages at the

18

rate of 35 [25] cents a gallon or fraction of a gallon; (2) wine or

19

other beverages [LIQUOR] of 21 percent alcohol by volume or less, at

20

the rate of 85 [60] cents a gallon or fraction of a gallon; and (3)-

21

other beverages [LIQUORS]; having a content of more than 21 percent

22

alcohol by volume at the rate of \$5.60 [\$4] a gallon.

23

* Sec. 2. The increase in taxes under sec. 1 of this Act takes effect

24

on the first day of the month after the month in which this Act takes

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* Sec. 3. To be consistent, wherever in AS 43.60 the phrases "intoxi-

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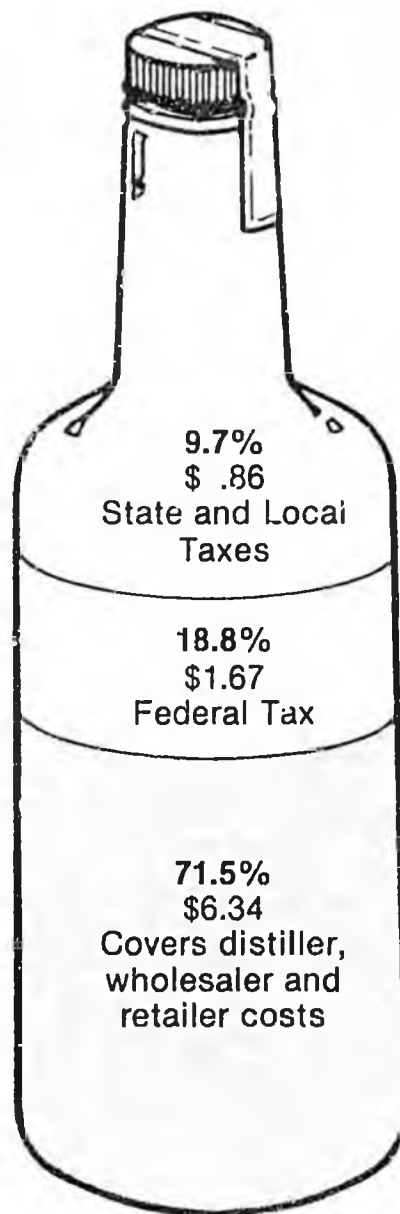
1 AS 01.10.070(c).

11/10/70

Excessive Tax Burden

Alaska

Out of the typical 1982 retail price of \$8.87 for a bottle of distilled spirits in Alaska . . .



} 28.5%
(\$2.53)
goes to
taxes

750 ml. bottle, 80 proof

provided by:

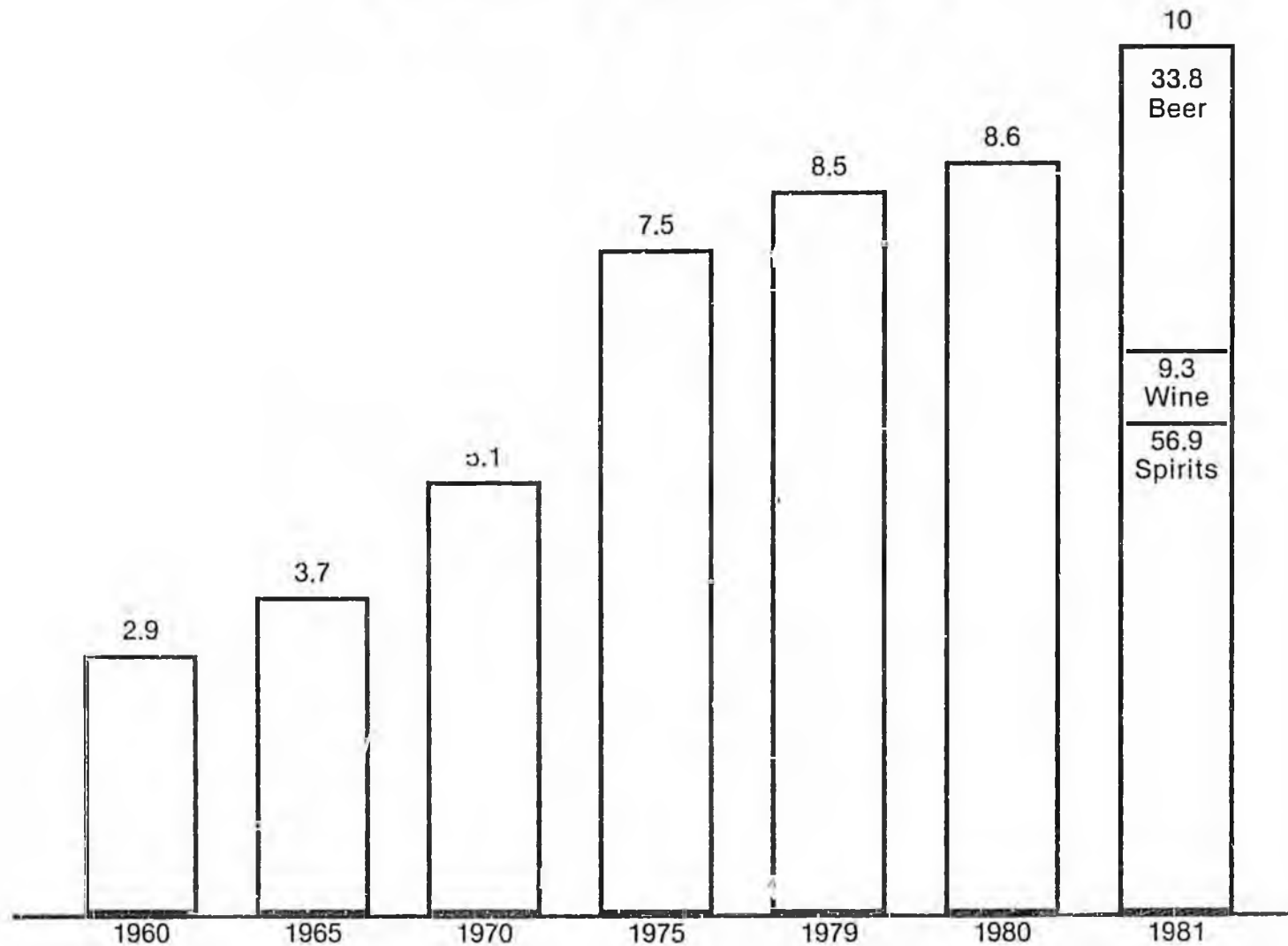
Distilled Spirits

Council of the U.S.

State and Local Revenues from Alcohol Beverages [Millions of Dollars]

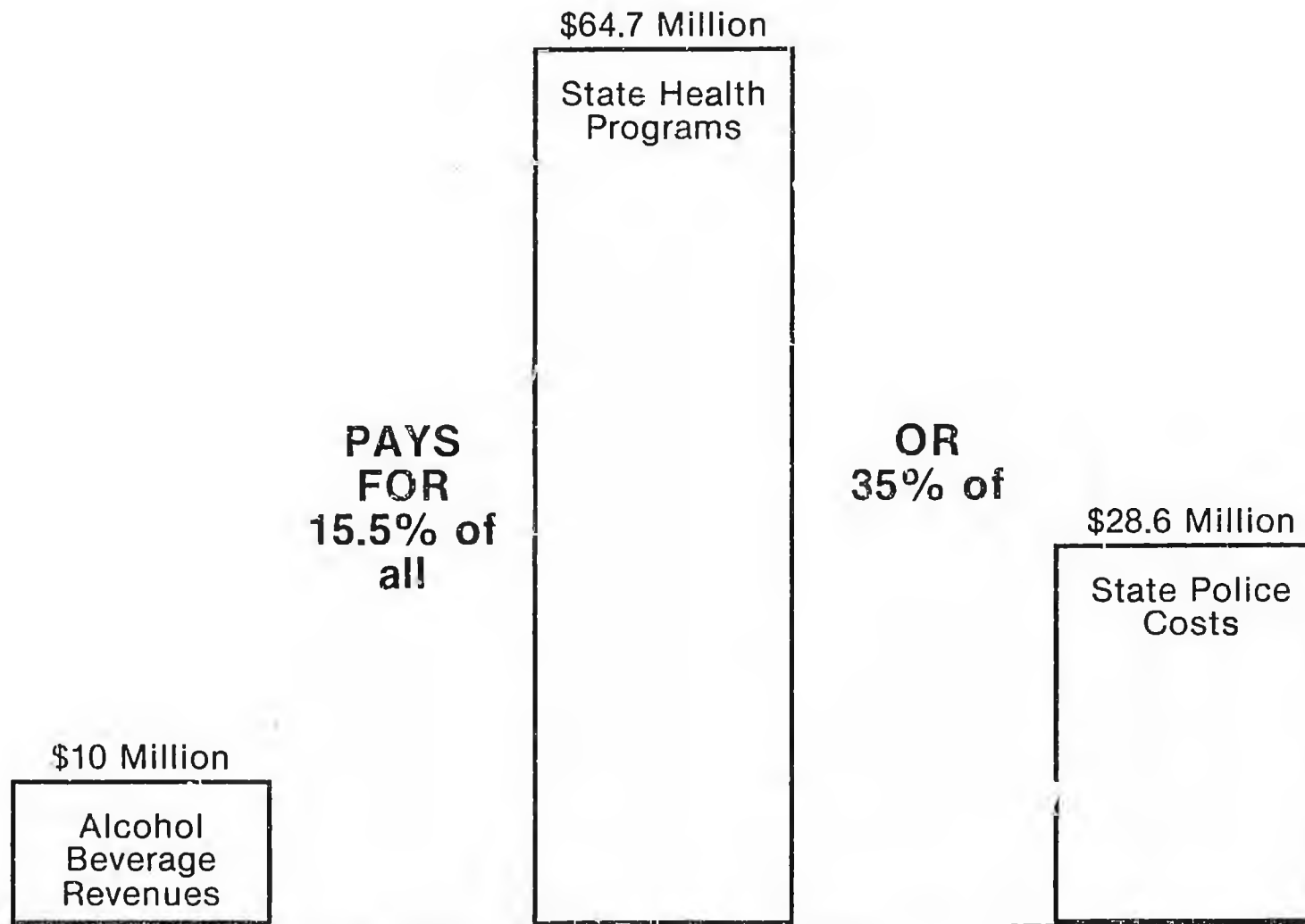
Alcohol beverages are an important revenue source in Alaska.

Of alcohol beverage revenues in Alaska, 56.9% comes from distilled spirits.



1981 State and Local Revenues From Alcohol Beverages Significant

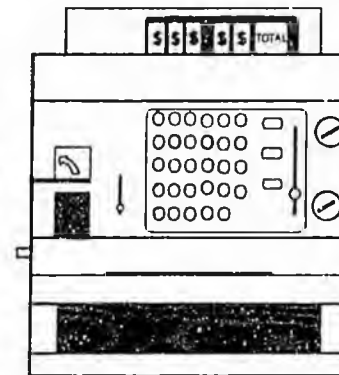
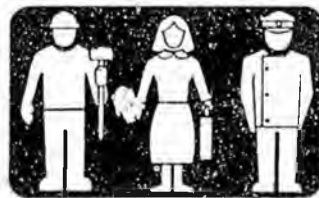
[Alaska]



Alcohol Beverage Industry Contributes:

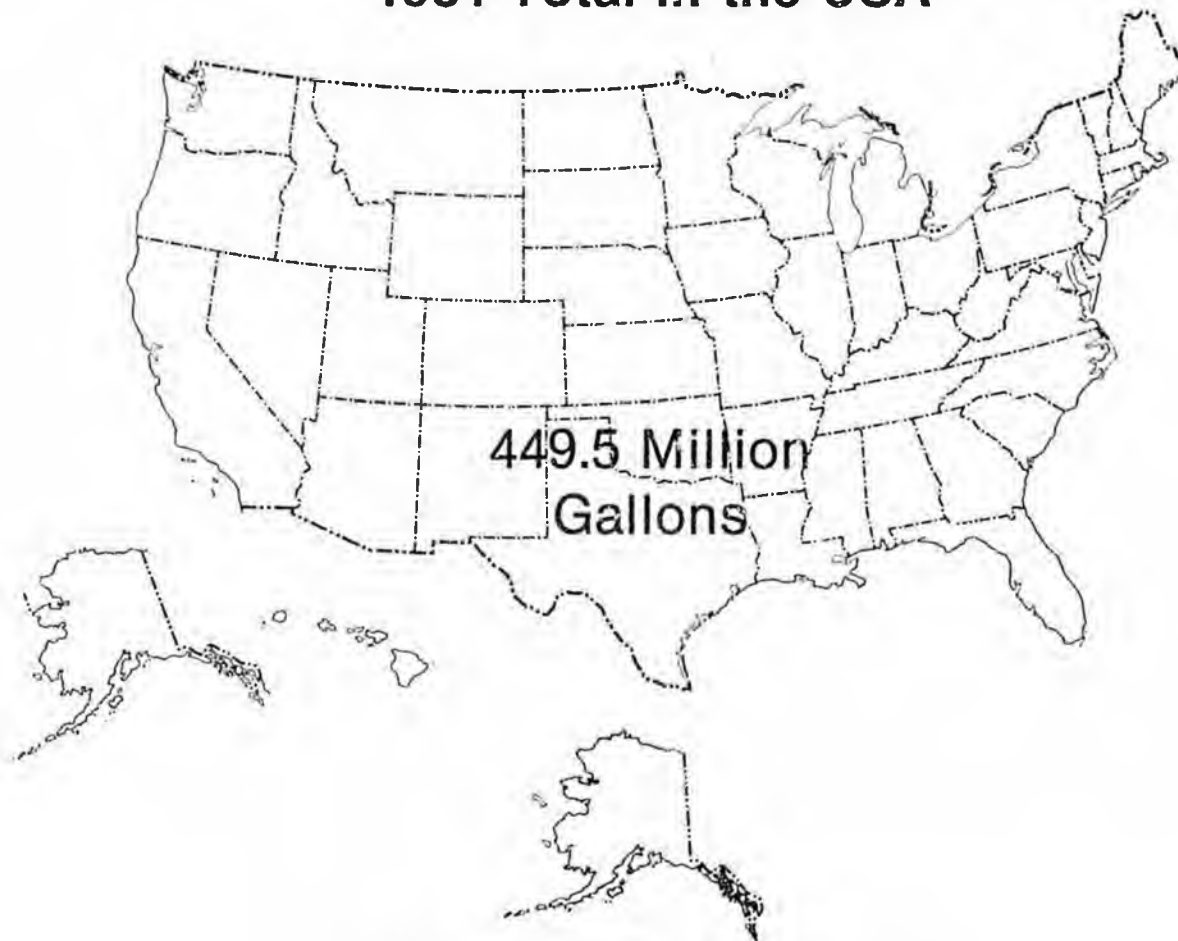
[To Alaska]

1981	1980	1980	1980
Revenues to State & Local Governments	Jobs	Payrolls & Profits	Retail Sales
\$10 Million	2,888	\$49.9 Million	\$268.5 Million



Distilled Spirits Consumption

1981 Total in the USA



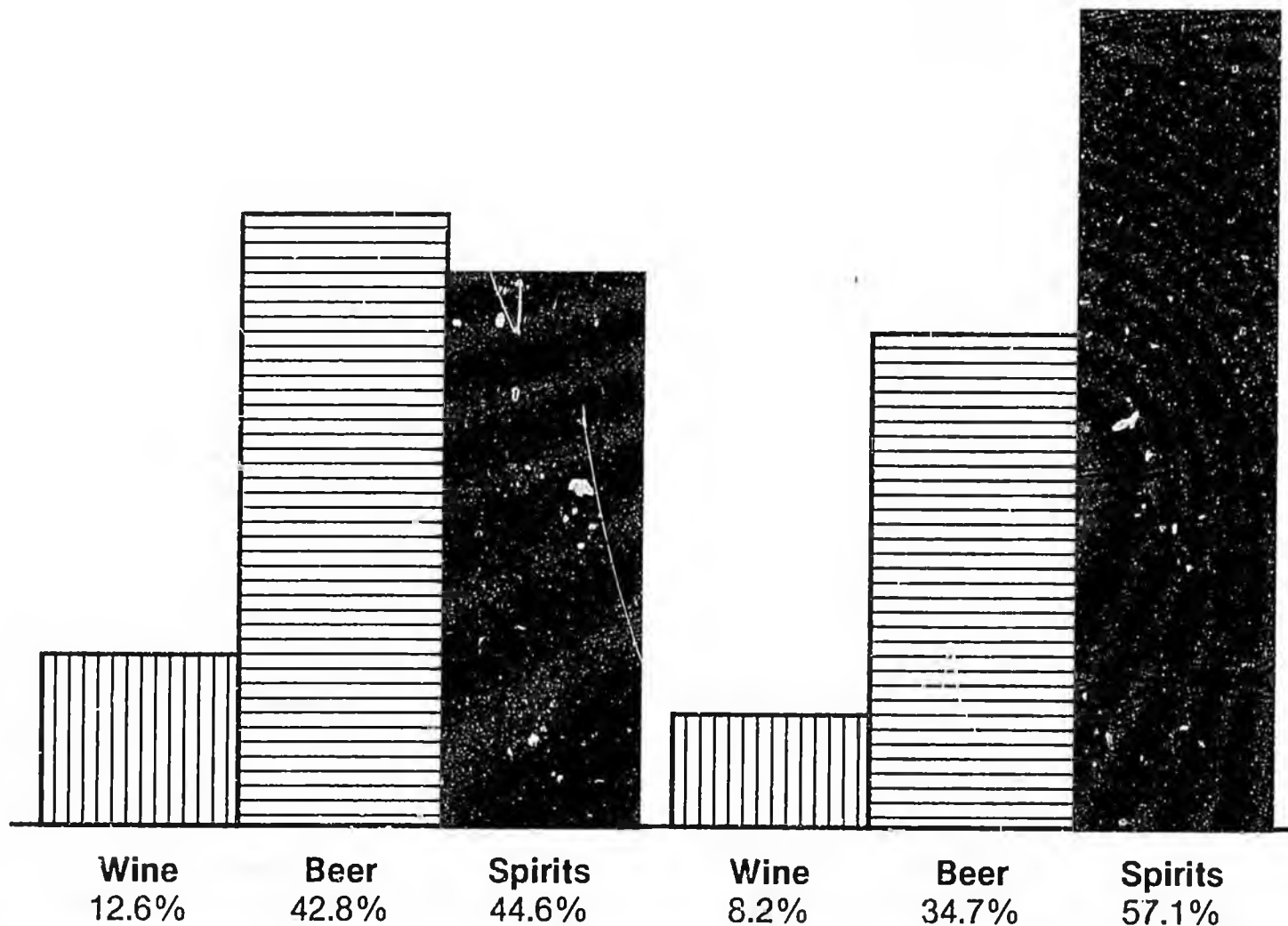
1981 Total in Alaska

1.36 Million Gallons

In Alaska, 44.6% of pure alcohol consumed in spirits
Yet distilled spirits paid 57.1% of state and local revenues
from alcohol beverages in 1980

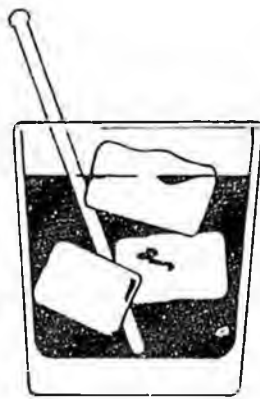
Pure Alcohol Consumption
by Product

State and Local Tax Collections
by Product



Inequity of Alcohol Beverage Tax

[Alaska]



1.5 oz. spirits or
0.6 oz. alcohol

=



12 oz. beer or
0.6 oz. alcohol

=



5 oz. table wine or
0.6 oz. alcohol

=

Same
Amount
of
Pure
Alcohol

Revenue from
one cocktail

=

1.7 times the
revenue from one
can of beer

=

2 times the
revenue from one
glass of table wine

ALASKA FACT SHEET

Key Points

- o Alaska does not need the revenue that would be generated from an increase in the excise tax on spirits because they have a huge surplus in their state budget. Their present tax rate is the fourth highest among all License states, 44% above the national average, with taxes accounting for 29% of the typical retail bottle price of spirits.
- o The alcohol beverage industry yielded \$10 million to the Alaska treasury (excluding local taxes) in 1981, 56.9% from spirits alone.
- o Spirits sales generate 7 times more revenue than wine sales do even though by volume, spirits sales are only 6% higher than wine sales.
- o The full-time equivalent of 2,888 persons were employed by Alaska's beverage alcohol industry in 1980.
- o The beverage alcohol industry contributes \$50 million in payroll & profits, and \$269 million in retail sales to the Alaska economy.
- o The revenue per gallon of pure alcohol from spirits, \$9.93, is almost twice the amount of revenue per gallon of pure alcohol from wine and 58% greater than that from beer.
- o The Federal government has granted licenses for 13 small fuel-alcohol plants in Alaska; each is capable of producing up to 10,000 proof gallons annually. The potential exists that the alcohol might be diverted to produce illegal, non-taxed spirits.

CONTRIBUTION TO ALASKA TAX REVENUES

Year	Excise Tax Revenues (\$000)		As % of All Excises		Sales Tax & License Fees (\$000)		Total Tax Revenue from (\$000)		As % of Total Tax Revenues	
	Spirits	All Bev. Alcohol	Spirits	All Bev. Alcohol	Spirits	All Bev. Alcohol	Spirits	All Bev. Alcohol	Spirits	All Bev. Alcohol
1977	5,037	7,909	7.6%	12.0%	489	949	5,526	8,858	0.7%	1.1%
1978	4,735	7,610	6.9	11.1	507	1,006	5,242	8,616	0.9	1.5
1979	4,535	7,443	6.1	10.0	487	1,053	5,022	8,496	0.6	1.0
1980	4,517	7,601	8.3	14.0	462	1,029	4,979	8,630	0.3	0.6
1981	5,025	8,482	9.4	15.9	655	1,494	5,680	9,976	0.2	0.4

ALL BEVERAGE ALCOHOL CONTRIBUTION TO ALASKA ECONOMY

Year	Licenses Issued*	Employment**	Payroll** & Profits (\$000)	Retail Sales (\$000)
1972	1,004	1,506	14,677	82,474
1977	1,149	2,505	32,624	187,364
1978E	1,167	2,518	34,742	198,618
1979E	1,210	2,674	40,292	227,777
1980E	1,210	2,888	49,930	268,510

*Approximates number of establishments. Due to duplication, number of establishments may be less than number of licenses issued. Includes manufacturing, wholesale and retail.

**Includes full-time equivalent employees and payroll at retail.

Sources: Available upon request. E - Estimated.

U.S. PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION
DISTILLED SPIRITS
1981

<u>RANK IN CONSUMPTION</u>	<u>STATE OR DISTRICT</u>	<u>GALLONAGE PER CAPITA</u>
1	District of Columbia	5.97
2	Nevada	5.28
3	New Hampshire	4.72
4	Alaska	3.30
5	Delaware	2.74
6	Florida	2.61
7	Maryland	2.57
7	Vermont	2.57
9	Massachusetts	2.47
10	Colorado	2.42
11	Wisconsin	2.37
12	Connecticut	2.34
13	California	2.33
13	Wyoming	2.33
15	Minnesota	2.27
16	New Jersey	2.26
17	New York	2.23
18	Hawaii	2.21
19	North Dakota	2.14
20	Illinois	2.13
21	Rhode Island	2.07
22	Maine	2.02
22	Arizona	2.02
22	Washington	2.02
25	Georgia	1.99
25	South Carolina	1.99
25	Montana	1.99
28	South Dakota	1.98
29	Michigan	1.90
30	Louisiana	1.88
31	Oregon	1.78
32	Virginia	1.74
33	Nebraska	1.69
34	North Carolina	1.66
35	New Mexico	1.61
36	Texas	1.60
37	Oklahoma	1.59
38	Mississippi	1.55
39	Indiana	1.48
40	Idaho	1.45
41	Kentucky	1.43
42	Pennsylvania	1.42
43	Alabama	1.39
43	Missouri	1.39
45	Tennessee	1.38
46	Kansas	1.34
47	Iowa	1.33
48	Arkansas	1.30
48	Ohio	1.30
50	West Virginia	1.25
51	Utah	0.99

ALL AGES PER CAPITA

Source: Economics & Statistics Division
Distilled Spirits Council of
the United States, Inc.

Alaska State Legislature

House of Representatives

Al Adams
Chairman

Committee on Finance

WHILE IN SESSION
Pouch V
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811
(907) 465-3706

OUT OF SESSION
P.O. Box 333
Ketchikan, Alaska 99752
(907) 442-3320
1024 W. 6th
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
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COPY
RECEIVED
MAR 4 1983



Official Business

March 2, 1983

MEMORANDUM

TO: Representative Mitch Abood, Chairman
House State Affairs

FROM: Representative Al Adams *AAA*

SUBJECT: House Bill 202 - Increasing the Liquor Tax

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Alcoholic Beverages	9,000	12,000	12,500	13,000
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STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY

POUCH Y - STATE CAPITOL
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811
907-465-3800


COPY

M E M O R A N D U M

March 11, 1983

SUBJECT: Dedication of liquor tax receipts to alcohol
rehabilitation programs
(Work Order No. 13-1017)

TO: Representative Mitchell E. Abood, Jr.
Chairman, House State Affairs Committee

FROM:  Russ Josephson
Legislative Counsel

You have asked whether liquor tax receipts may be retained in the communities where they are collected and be used there for funding alcohol rehabilitation programs.

The "earmarking" of revenues in this way creates a dedicated fund. Under the Alaska Constitution, Article IX, section 7, as interpreted by the Alaska Supreme Court in State v. Alex, 646 P.2d 203 (Alaska 1982), the prohibition against dedicated funds extends to all sources of public revenues and not just "proceeds of any state tax or license". The attorney general recently rendered an opinion (Op. Atty. Gen. File Nos. J66-785-81 and J66-649-80) clarifying what the Supreme Court holding might be with regard to several specific funds and accounts and declared that certain exceptions might be implied by the Alaska Supreme Court. However, none of those implied exceptions includes liquor tax receipts. Therefore, liquor tax receipts may not be dedicated constitutionally and the question of retention of liquor tax receipts in the communities where they are collected need not be addressed here.

Although a dedicated fund is prohibited constitutionally, there is another way to assure that there is a relationship between the liquor tax and the alcohol rehabilitation programs. The same attorney general's opinion mentioned above outlines a method of appropriating in this type of situation that ensures effective legislative control over state finances while providing for budgeting flexibility for programs like this with needs that are unpredictable. That

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method involves an appropriation to a separate fund in an amount to be ascertained by reference to receipts from a specified source (e.g., liquor tax receipts) during a definite period (annually or for the two fiscal years over which the present legislature has control).

RJ:ljb

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Carol Kopansky. I have a masters degree in family counseling. For the last ten years, I have worked clinically with alcoholics and alcohol abusers, for the Texas Commission on Alcoholism, the National Council on Alcoholism, and Fairbanks Native Association. I first came to Alaska as a consultant to the Alaska Christian Conference. Until my surgery for cancer last December, I was executive director to the Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant and Retailers Association. I am a recovered alcoholic.

The two most generally discussed justifications for raising the excise tax on beverage alcohol are:

1. to fund alcoholism programs and
2. to limit the availability of alcohol to reduce the problems of abuse.

These two cannot be separated, for they are like the head and tail of a cat-- parts of the same whole.

Alcoholism treatment has been, for the most part, ineffective for a couple of reasons:

1. there is basically one narrow model for treatment, and if the client does not respond to it, he is labeled a "resistant client." This keeps the field from having to modify itself or try anything new, and places the blame for failure somewhere else.
2. the emphasis is on keeping the beds full (for that is the basis of funding) rather than individual client outcomes.

In the mid 70's, with indicators of a decline in federal dollars, and the uneasy knowledge that treatment was ineffective, elements within the alcoholism field began looking for "public awareness" tactics to keep the public from looking too closely at program accountability and treatment outcomes, and to justify continued funding. Some were assigned to monitor upcoming trends in funding, and to make them "alcohol related" so the alcoholism field could obtain a part of whatever funding fad came upon the horizon. Statements were also made, such as "we have to make them think we're doing something." One of the answers arrived at was to attack the beverage industry, in full knowledge that to do so countered everything we had learned clinically from AA and Alanon. In the mid 70's, I opposed the Texas Commission on Alcoholism on this stance, and in the late 70's, opposed N.C.A.

I still oppose it, because to blame and penalize the alcohol beverage industry for alcoholism and alcohol abuse is clinically destructive to the person with an alcohol problem.

Ruined Beverage Information Council

I even opposed ~~AA~~ as recently as last November for their "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" campaign. It is the antithesis of what Alanon has effectively taught for years. If a person chooses to drink abusively, he MUST be allowed to take all the consequences of his own behavior, if he's ever to change.

Steps to reduce availability and consumption will only work on those who were never a problem in the first place. I became an alcoholic in a dry county. A quart of Pearl beer was \$3 from the bootlegger. I understand from friends in some villages that a fifth of whiskey is now worth \$85, and still selling.

There is a circular culpability in this process. For instance, all of us have a very real concern about drunken driving. It will not be stopped until responsibility for that behavior rests solely upon the drunken driver. But consider what happens currently.

Individuals within alcoholism programs fan the emotional flames to cut the availability of beverage alcohol to solve the problems the field was funded to solve and hasn't.

Emotional statements to reduce availability such as "stop maiming our children" are used to justify limitations on the industry or on those who can legally drink.

Blame is also placed on the legal system, and judges are criticized because many of those involved in fatalities are repeat offenders.

Judges explain that the offenders were referred for treatment.

If offenders do not go to their treatment, they are to be turned back over to the judges for failure to comply.. But I have personally worked with DWI offenders in treatment programs. Many had not been seen in months. But when I turned the names into the supervisor, they were not turned into the judges. Turning them back to the courts reduces the numbers, makes the program look less effective, and threatens funding. This is a disservice to the client, the legal system, the taxpayer, and those who may be hit and run by a repeat offender who has, in fact, received no help.

No wonder it's easier to blame the industry.

Emotion-ality, use of flagrantly invalid information (as in the mention of new medical evidence of some mysterious metabolic change at age 21) and blame, are characteristic of how we are smokescreened away from the real issues:

1. really solving the problem and
2. spending our tax dollars effectively.

There are those who say alcoholics "can't" be responsible and have no choice. This is simply not true. Even in their worst times, they have the choice. The choice may be to drink or go through the pain of withdrawal or the problems we have created for ourselves, but it is still a choice. If we had no choice but to drink, no one could ever get sober, and many of us do so. Frankly, even as a clinician, I've had quite enough of drunkenness and insanity as excuses for unacceptable behavior which free persons from responsibility for their own actions.

I am an alcoholic with ten years sobriety. I am responsible for both my alcoholism and its continued arrest. My alcoholism, my sobriety, and my behavior are my own problem--not my family's, not my state's, not my neighbors, not the alcohol beverage industry's.

Instead of reducing the productive capacity of ^{the hospitality} industry which generates over ~~an~~ million dollars a year already for state coffers, let's get past the smokescreen and take a hard look at the effectiveness of the dollars already being spent, and an even harder look at the only clinical hope for the alcoholic and the alcohol abuser. If the problems are ever to be solved, then the penalties must be placed where they belong---on those who abuse.

Thank you.