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Consumer/Health Groups Call on Treasury Department to Provide Consumers with Alcohol Labeling Information

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

Washington, DC; April 15, 2011 – As part of Alcohol Awareness Month, a coalition of public interest groups today called on Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau Administrator John Manfreda to finalize a proposed rule on labeling of alcoholic beverages.

“Awareness starts with information,” the groups wrote in their letters. “Unfortunately, consumers are largely in the dark when it comes to information about alcoholic beverages.”

The groups – Center for Science in the Public Interest, Consumer Federation of America, National Consumers League, and Shape Up America! – are calling on the TTB to finalize and strengthen a rule that was proposed in 2007 to require a standardized “Alcohol Facts” panel on all beer, wine and distilled spirits products. Today, alcoholic beverages are the only major category of consumable products not required to carry label information summarizing the basic characteristics of the product.

TTB’s proposed rule would require a “serving facts” panel that would include largely irrelevant nutrition information such as protein and fat, but incredibly, not require disclosure of alcohol content. Public interest groups have called for TTB to mandate alcohol information on a standardized label, including the serving size, number of servings per container, percentage alcohol by volume and the amount of alcohol (in fl oz) per serving. The groups also urged TTB to require that alcoholic-beverage labels contain a statement defining “moderate” – or low-risk – drinking, derived from the U.S. Government’s Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The groups noted that “Adequate labeling information can serve as a tool to help reduce alcohol abuse, drunk driving, obesity, and many diseases attributable to excessive alcohol intake.”

Since the close of the public comment period in February 2008, TTB has not moved forward with issuing final regulations. The groups are urging Secretary Geithner and Administrator Manfreda to finalize the alcohol labeling rule immediately.

About the Center for Science in the Public Interest

Since 1971, the Center for Science in the Public Interest has been a strong advocate for nutrition and health, food safety, alcohol policy, and sound science. Founded by executive director Michael Jacobson, Ph.D. and two other scientists, CSPI has long sought to educate the public, advocate government policies that are consistent with scientific evidence on health and environmental issues, and counter industry’s powerful influence on public opinion and public policies.

About the Consumer Federation of America

Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 nonprofit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy and education. CFA’s Food Policy Institute was created in 1999 and engages in research, education and advocacy on food and agricultural policy, food safety, nutrition, labeling and agricultural biotechnology.

About the National Consumers League

Founded in 1899, the National Consumers League is America’s pioneer consumer organization. Its mission is to protect and promote social and economic justice for consumers and workers in the United States and abroad. NCL is a private, nonprofit membership organization. For more information, visit www.nclnet.org.

About Shape Up America!

Shape Up America! was founded in 1994 by former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to raise awareness of the health effects of obesity and to provide responsible information on weight management to the public and to health care professionals. The organization maintains an award winning website – www.shapeup.org – accessed by more than 100,000 visitors each month and an “opt-in” e-newsletter with more than 24,000 subscribers.

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