

NEWS RELEASE

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Commercial Alert Urges Distillers to Forgo TV Ad Campaign

Commercial Alert urged the hard liquor industry not to carry out a new proposed \$20 million to \$40 million ad campaign on evening cable television.

According to today's *Wall Street Journal*, "The U.S. liquor industry is contemplating a blitz of commercials on night-time cable television aimed at reversing a two-decade slide in booze drinking, according to a strategy memo prepared for a trade group by ad agency Bozell Worldwide." The Bozell memo to the Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. (DISCUS) was dated December 7.

"There is absolutely no good reason to try to pump up the consumption of booze in the United States, and many reasons not to," said Gary Ruskin, director of Commercial Alert. "At this moment, millions of Americans are engaged in a battle with themselves to stay away from the bottle. The last thing we need is a propaganda blitz to help push them over the edge."

"We ask Bozell and the distillers to reflect upon the predictable human toll of their proposed ads: those killed or maimed by drunk drivers, marriages wrecked from alcohol abuse, children neglected, families ruined," Ruskin said.

"It is time to hold ad agency and liquor executives personally responsible for the damage that their ads do to families and children," Ruskin said.

In June, 1996, Joseph E. Seagrams & Sons Co. broke a 48 year old voluntary ban on advertising hard liquor on television. Five months later, DISCUS re-wrote its Code of Good Practice to allow its member distillers to advertise on radio and television.

"Distillers should not use television to gain access to children and teenagers in their homes to cajole them to drink hard liquor," Ruskin said. "We urge TV stations not to run liquor ads."

The proposed \$20 million to \$40 million TV ad campaign would be a dramatic increase in televised liquor ads. The *Journal* states that "According to Competitive Media Reporting...liquor marketers last year spent only about \$3.1 million on TV advertising – \$1.2 million on local "spot" TV and \$1.9 million on cable."

Commercial Alert was founded last year to oppose the excesses of commercialism, advertising and marketing. The web address for Commercial Alert is <http://www.essential.org/alert/>.