

SAFER in Sacramento

Using WHO guidelines to track legislative trends in California, U.S.A.

Presented at the Global Alcohol Policy Conference
October 25, 2023

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Carson Benowitz-Fredericks has no conflicts of interest to declare.

About Alcohol Justice



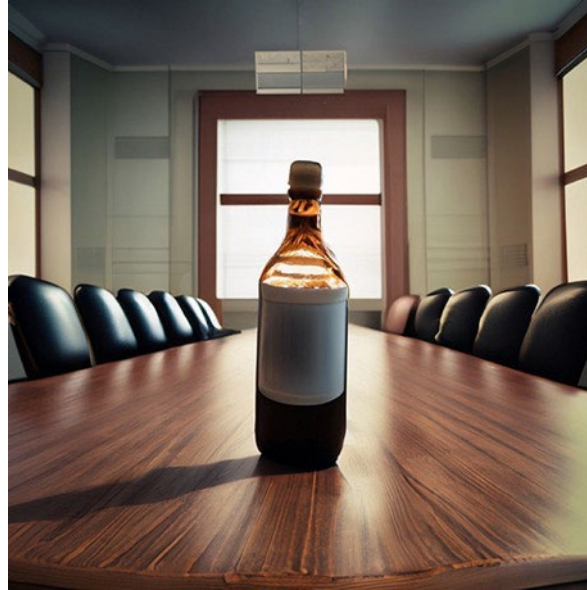
- Nonprofit based in San Francisco Bay Area
- Dedicated to evidence-based policy that protects public health and safety
- Files approx. 30 position letters per year in state
- Organizes on 5-6 key bills per year

California and Alcohol Harm



- 39 million residents in state
- 19,355 deaths annually (CDPH 2023)
- 36% increase in rate of ETOH-related deaths, 2019–2021 (CDC WONDER 2023 via Phil Cain)
- \$35 billion in annual costs from drinking; \$2.44 per drink (Sacks et al. 2015)
- 10,666 in AUD tx, 28,118 in combined SUD/AUD tx (SAMHSA 2020)

California and Alcohol Economy



- 18,000 producers and wholesalers; 90,000 retailers (CA ABC 2023)
- 16% increase in excise tax revenue, 2019–2021, from \$369m to \$429m (CADFTA 2023)
- Excise tax set in 1992, 52% depreciation
- 2.63 gal (10 L) EtOH per capita; global average 1.6 gal (6.2 L) (NIAAA 2020, WHO 2018)
- CA federal representatives were 2 of 3 biggest recipients of industry donations in 2022; 3 of 3 in 2018 (OpenSecrets 2023)

CA 10-Year Review of Alcohol Policy



- California records all historical bills: leginfo.ca.gov
- Keyword search for alcohol related bills
- Exclusion: no change to code, pro forma inclusion (e.g. licensures), industrial EtOH
- 380 bills identified, 319 SAFER-relevant

- SAFER recommendations used as coding criteria (WHO 2018)
- No ideal endpoint identified; bills coded “aligned” or “disaligned”
- Also: industry, tier, district vs. statewide

The SAFER interventions



Strengthen restrictions on alcohol availability

Enacting and enforcing restrictions on commercial or public availability of alcohol through laws, policies, and programmes are important ways to reduce harmful use of alcohol. Such strategies provide essential measures to prevent easy access to alcohol by young people and other vulnerable and high-risk groups.



Advance and enforce drink driving counter measures

Road users who are impaired by alcohol have a significantly higher risk of being involved in a crash. Enacting and enforcing strong drink-driving laws and low blood alcohol concentration limits via sobriety checkpoints and random breath testing will help to turn the tide.



Facilitate access to screening, brief interventions and treatment

Health professionals have an important role in helping people to reduce or stop their drinking to reduce health risks, and health services have to provide effective interventions for those in need of help and their families.



Enforce bans or comprehensive restrictions on alcohol advertising, sponsorship, and promotion

Bans and comprehensive restrictions on alcohol advertising, sponsorship and promotion are impactful and cost-effective measures. Enacting and enforcing bans or comprehensive restrictions on exposure to them in the digital world will bring public health benefits and help protect children, adolescents and abstainers from the pressure to start consuming alcohol.

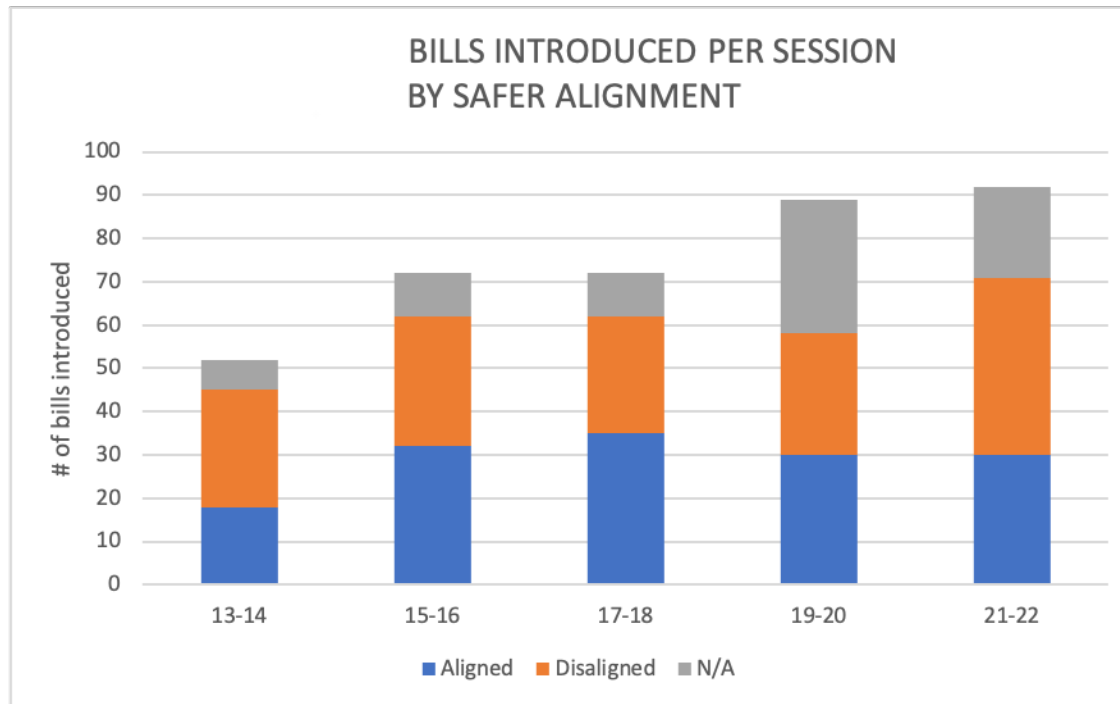


Raise prices on alcohol through excise taxes and pricing policies

Alcohol taxation and pricing policies are among the most effective and cost-effective alcohol control measures. An increase in excise taxes on alcoholic beverages is a proven measure to reduce harmful use of alcohol and it provides governments revenue to offset the economic costs of harmful use of alcohol.

CA Overall EtOH Policy Trends

SESSION	Total Bills Intro'd	Total EtOH Bills Intro'd	SIGNED INTO LAW (%)		% of EtOH Bills
			Total	EtOH	
2021 - 2022	5,129	94	1892 (37%)	46 (49%)	1.83
2019 - 2020	4,848	89	1242 (26%)	24 (27%)	1.86
2017 - 2018	4,775	73	1875 (39%)	38 (52%)	1.53
2015 - 2016	4,471	72	1703 (38%)	36 (50%)	1.61
2013 - 2014	4,786	52	1872 (39%)	30 (58%)	1.09
TOTAL	24,009	380	8584 (36%)	144 (44%)	1.77



Bills Passed Into Law



- Disaligned bills more likely to be introduced (153 vs. 146 aligned) and more likely to be signed into law (95 vs. 42)
- Alcohol access-related bills most frequent SAFER domain (113, 90 disaligned)

- Price-domain bills rare (31); 5 aligned signed into law
- Aligned bills most likely to be treatment, drink-driving prevention
- 74% of district bills signed into law, nearly all disaligned

Takeaways

- Levels of interest in alcohol-related legislation increased steadily from 2013 to 2022
- Although disaligned EtOH legislation increased post-COVID, ratio always favored deregulation
- Local control never being used for protective policy
- Alcohol access most popular domain to deregulate
- Nearly all protective policy that passes is dedicated to post-harm, individual-level interventions (treatment and punishment)
- Despite public opinion polling showing strong support for more protective policies, legislators do not feel urgency to align to SAFER



What Next?



- Rich archive of CA legislative data, including analyses, floor discussions, finance reports
- Where possible, CA orgs should support organizing and base building; where not possible, generate resources sensitive to legislator priorities
- 16% of bills were not SAFER-relevant—including labels, product design

Acknowledgments & Contact

Thank you to:

Haley Fromkin, coauthor

Cruz Avila

Michael Scippa

Mayra Jimenez, Raul Verdugo, & CAPA

FULL TEXT OF REPORT:

[https://www.alcoholjustice.org/images/reports/reports-full/
CATY-RAP-FINAL-web.pdf](https://www.alcoholjustice.org/images/reports/reports-full/CATY-RAP-FINAL-web.pdf)

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