

OMAHA COALITION MEETING
Wednesday, March 11, 2026
9 a.m.

Please use to sign-in:



A G E N D A

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Review of the February 11, 2026 Meeting Minutes
(please contact PEM staff with corrections)
- III. Sinclair Method for Alcohol Treatment
Ed Kaiser, Kaiser Treatment
- IV. Focus Area Updates
 - a. Local
 - i. Amplify Impact Showcase
 - b. Policy
 - i. Legislative Update
 - ii. AAN Presentation
 - c. Enforcement
 - i. Impaired Driving enforcements in March
 - ii. Law Enforcement Training April 14-15
 - d. Youth
 - i. Youth Leadership Day Recap
 - ii. Next meeting March 16th at 7:00 p.m.
 - iii. Youth Leadership Retreat set for June 1-3, 2026
 - e. Awareness
 - i. March Research Summary available at www.projectextramile.org
- V. Additional Discussion/Announcements
- VI. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date: **April 8, 9 a.m. – Dr. Berrigan, National Cancer Institute (ret.)**
UNO's Community Engagement Center, Room 128

IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

Nebraska Public Health Conference – March 30 & 31, 2026
Nebraska Liquor Control Commission Hearings – April 7 & 8, 2026

PROJECT EXTRA MILE

OMAHA METRO AREA COALITION MEETING MINUTES February 11, 2026

- I. Call to Order: Coalition Chair Tom Safranek called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
- II. Welcome and Introductions: Coalition members and speakers in attendance: Andy Link, Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell, Tom Safranek, Jona Beck, Ramey Stillman, Saral Sapkota, Chris Fitch, Ed Kaiser, Lorelle Mueting, Jason Sharp, Levelle Wells, Alvin McCruel, and Will Meier. Coalition members in attendance via Zoom: Shannon Nyhoff, Brian Ortner, Courtney Zimbelman-Burt, Micah Chaffee, Ashley Rowe, Lanette Richards, Maggie Ballard, Elizabeth Woods, Tracy Burmeister, and Jayna Schaaf. Staff members: Chris Wagner, Beatha Kliewer, and Liene Topko.
- III. Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the January 21st meeting were included in the coalition meeting packet. No additions or corrections were made.
- IV. BCC Efforts to Prevent and Treat Cancer in Nebraska: Andy Link with the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center (BCC) discussed the alcohol-related cancer incidence and mortality in Nebraska. He shared that the greatest alcohol misuse they see is in rural Nebraska. Alcohol is the third leading cancer risk factor. Link highlighted that smoking and alcohol consumption increases the risk of lung cancer. The BCC has created an online platform, Cancer InFocus, to help better see and understand the cancer impacts in Nebraska and look at several factors and localities. One of the goals BCC has is to be more involved in communities and raise awareness and screening as well as spread prevention messaging.
- V. Focus Area Updates
 - a. Policy
 - i. Chris Wagner provided an update on alcohol-related legislation. Efforts continue to move LB 330 forward with an amendment that has not yet been posted to decrease the sales tax increase from a 10% increase to 3%. LB 856 would increase the excise tax on certain businesses that sell alcohol, tobacco, and vaping products in designated census tracts. This bill is awaiting a hearing. LB 1085 and 1004 were heard before the General Affairs Committee on February 9th.
 - ii. PEM's legislative tracking sheet is available on the website: <https://www.projectextramile.org/policy/nebraska-legislative-tracking-sheet>
 - b. Enforcement
 - i. Liene Topko shared that the organization is working with the Nebraska State patrol to expand proactive alcohol-related enforcements to include alcohol delivery compliance checks and sales to intoxicated persons operations.
 - ii. The 2026 Law Enforcement Training will focus on alcohol retail compliance checks and will take place in North Platte on April 14 and Grand Island on April 15.

- c. Youth
 - i. Wagner informed the group that Youth Leadership Day will take place the day of the hearing for LB 856 to provide the students an opportunity to meet with senators, observe debate, and provide testimony at the hearing.
 - ii. The 2026 Youth Leadership Retreat has been scheduled for June 1-3, 2026.
 - iii. Next YLN meeting is on Monday, February 23rd at 7:00 p.m.

VI. Awareness:

- a. The February Research Summary is available at www.projectextramile.org/ResearchSummary

VII. Additional Discussion/Announcements: N/A

VIII. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date: The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

AMPLIFY IMPACT



SEE THE WORK.
JOIN THE CHANGE.

AN ENGAGEMENT SHOWCASE

BARBARA WEITZ COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT CENTER

MARCH 26
3 PM TO 6 PM



Amplify Impact is a dynamic showcase celebrating the power of partnership at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). This interactive event brings together community partners, faculty, students, and guests to explore how co-created collaborations create real-world impact.

- Explore community-driven collaboration firsthand
- Experience guided tours of office and meeting spaces
- Share ideas/build connections with UNO and community partners
- Listen to stories of shared success
- Interact with the UNO Artificial Intelligence Center for Collaborative Outreach, Research, and Education (AI-CCORE)

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED.



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LEARN MORE / RSVP



OR RSVP ONLINE

FOLLOW US @UNOENGAGE

PROJECT EXTRA MILE
2026 Legislative Bill Tracking

Bill #	Sponsor(s)	Description	Bill Status	Additional Information
LB790	Bosn Judiciary	Change sanctions available for substance abuse violations of parole	Hearing 1/23/26	Allows parole officers to administer sanctions if they have reasonable cause to believe that a parolee has committed or is about to commit a substance abuse violation while on parole.
LB856 <i>Support</i>	McKinney Revenue	Adopt the Community Reinvestment and Equity Act, establish an excise tax, and create a fund and a grant program	Hearing 2/18/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates the Community Reinvestment and Equity Act which imposes a 5% geographically targeted community reinvestment excise tax to support health and safety on covered businesses operating in qualified census tracts. Defines covered businesses as gas stations, convenience stores, or package liquor stores that sell alcoholic liquor, tobacco products, or cigarettes for off-premises consumption. Qualified census tracts are found in the following counties: Adams, Buffalo, Douglas, Gage, Hooker, Jefferson, Lancaster, Sarpy, and Scotts Bluff. Click here for more details. Proceeds of the tax are designated for federally qualified health centers, homeless services, re-entry housing, healthy food access, childcare, and community development initiatives. Creates the Community Reinvestment Fund to be used for grants for: childcare, early childhood development, community development initiatives, healthcare, healthy food access, homeless services, and re-entry housing.
LB1004 <i>Oppose</i>	Clouse General Affairs	Change the regulation of nonalcoholic beer under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act	<i>General File</i> 2/25/26	<p>Indicates that beer, wine, and spirits are one-half of one percent or more alcohol by volume to match the federal definition. Removes ‘near beer’ from the definition of beer and specifies that beer does not include nonalcoholic beer. Prohibits persons from selling or furnishing these products to minors, however it does NOT prohibit possession or consumption by minors. Does NOT establish penalties for selling/furnishing to minors.</p> <p>AM 2112 –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines that beer does not include nonalcoholic beer; Defines nonalcoholic drinks as nonalcoholic beer, nonalcoholic wine, and nonalcoholic spirits;

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets the penalty for the sale, procurement, or delivery of nonalcoholic drinks to minors as a Class IV misdemeanor • Adds nonalcoholic beverages to the co-branding statutes, making it illegal for retailers to place non-alcoholic beverages, or ads for them, adjacent to soft drinks, juices, water, candy, or snacks portraying cartoons or youth-oriented images
LB1085	Clouse General Affairs	Change provisions relating to retail, bottle club, craft brewery, and microdistillery licenses, Nebraska Liquor Control Commission powers and duties, and penalties for violations under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act	<i>Portions amended into LB1235 as AM2178 3/4/26</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifies that bottle clubs aren't only for the express purpose of consuming alcoholic liquor. • Requires the Liquor Control Commission to consider 1) evidence submitted by the applicant that the local governing body acted arbitrarily and capriciously when recommending denial, and 2) whether the applicant or its entities are delinquent on any federal, state, or local taxes. • Increases penalties for selling alcoholic liquor at retail without a valid license. Class I misdemeanor for first offense and Class IV felony for second and subsequent offenses.
LB1115	Storer General Affairs	Exempt microbreweries from certain distribution agreement requirements between beer suppliers and wholesalers	Hearing 2/9/26	Exempts microbreweries from the beer distribution requirements that govern contracts between beer suppliers and wholesalers.
LB1128	Dover General Affairs	Change provisions relating to entertainment district licenses under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act	<i>Amended into LB1235 as AM2178 3/4/26</i>	Creates a new class of entertainment district liquor license, the consumption-only license to be utilized by businesses within entertainment districts that do not themselves sell alcoholic products to permit consumption inside the business so long as they are within an entertainment district and follow the Liquor Control Act. Sets the license fee at \$25.
LB1151 <i>Oppose</i>	Clouse General Affairs	Provide for a regional craft brewery license under the Nebraska Liquor Control Act	Hearing 2/9/26	<p>Creates a new class of liquor license, the regional craft brewery license for breweries producing between 20 thousand and 200 thousand barrels per year. Sets the license fee at \$250. Allows the licensee to purchase & sell products from a wholesaler but does not allow self-distribution of products.</p> <p>AM2001 – reduces maximum number of barrels from 200 to 95 thousand per year</p>

<p>LB1235</p>	<p>General Affairs Committee General Affairs</p>	<p>Change and transfer provisions of the Nebraska Medical Cannabis Patient Protection Act and the Nebraska Medical Cannabis Regulation Act and provide for taxation</p>	<p><i>Select File 3/10/26</i></p>	<p>Changes provisions of the Nebraska Medical Cannabis Patient Protection Act and the Nebraska Medical Cannabis Regulation Act.</p> <p>AM2178 – adopted Amends LB1128 and portions of LB1085 into the bill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a new class of entertainment district liquor license, the consumption-only license to be utilized by businesses within entertainment districts that do not themselves sell alcoholic products to permit consumption inside the business so long as they are within an entertainment district and follow the Liquor Control Act. Sets the license fee at \$25. • Clarifies that bottle clubs aren't only for the express purpose of consuming alcoholic liquor. • Requires the Liquor Control Commission to consider whether the applicant or its entities are delinquent on any federal, state, or local taxes. • Increases penalties for selling alcoholic liquor at retail without a valid license. Class I misdemeanor for first offense and Class IV felony for second and subsequent offenses. <p>AM1889 – withdrawn AM2354 – withdrawn AM2524 – pending ER136 – pending</p>
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* Testimony provided by Project Extra Mile
+ Emergency clause included

TRAINING TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Understanding the scope and consequences of underage drinking today
- Research on the effectiveness of youth alcohol enforcement efforts
- Planning, implementing, evaluating, and communicating on alcohol compliance checks
- Overcoming challenges while conducting compliance check operations
- Building partnerships and community support for underage drinking prevention efforts



OUR TRAINER:



**Retired Special Agent
Nancy McGee**

served for nearly 30 years in the Missouri Department of Public Safety— Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Control. As a special agent stationed in the St. Louis District specializing in alcohol enforcement, McGee was responsible for enforcing Missouri’s Liquor Control Act. She was in charge of administering the state’s alcohol compliance check program as well as coordinating the department’s efforts on college campuses and with community coalition groups.

For more information, contact
Project Extra Mile at
402-963-9047
-or-
info@projectextramile.org

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

Multi-Agency Alcohol Compliance Checks



projectextramile

April 14, 2026 - North Platte, NE
April 15, 2026 - Grand Island, NE

Funding provided by:



Space is limited to 30 participants per training site. Registration is available at www.projectextramile.org or by scanning the QR code.

Law Enforcement Training 2026



In collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Transportation-Highway Safety Office, Project Extra Mile is coordinating a FREE Law Enforcement Training on the topic of **Multi-Agency Alcohol Compliance Checks**

This training is **FREE** for all Law Enforcement

This project is supported by the Nebraska Department of Transportation - Highway Safety Office (CFDA 20.616).



Training Locations

North Platte, NE

April 14, 2026

Grand Island, NE

April 15, 2026

Who should attend?

Law Enforcement:

- Liquor Investigators,
- Traffic Officers,
- Patrol Officers,
- City/County/State Attorneys

Liquor Regulators

Community Coalitions

Health Departments

Daily Schedule

Trainings will run from:

8:00am - 4:00pm

Breakfast and Lunch will be provided.

Deadline to register is April 3, 2026

Registration is limited to 30 participants per site. Law Enforcement will be prioritized over other interested parties.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP NETWORK

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. ADVOCACY. AWARENESS. ACTION

READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



Youth in grades 8-12 in the Omaha Metro Area are invited to join Project Extra Mile's Youth Leadership Network. Members will learn about the harms of excessive alcohol use in our community, develop the leadership skills needed to make real change, and put those skills into action!

FOCUSING ON EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO LEAD



Project Extra Mile has been creating community change for over 25 years and we are passionate about reducing alcohol-related harms in our community. In the Youth Leadership Network, we focus on teaching and practicing the skills needed to create change. Youth will receive expert guidance on projects that will utilize media literacy, public speaking, advocacy, problem-solving, and community organizing skills that they'll develop from this initiative.

A YOUTH-LED APPROACH



We're serious about youth leadership, which is why all projects are planned and developed by the youth themselves. Youth projects over the last couple years have included hosting a town hall, meeting with state senators, creating media campaigns to raise awareness, and more!

MEET AND LEARN FROM LOCAL AND STATE POLICYMAKERS

CREATE YOUR OWN MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

LEARN HOW TO USE YOUR INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP STYLE

MEET NEW FRIENDS AND DEVELOP SKILLS TO LAST A LIFETIME

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE FOR SPRING 2026!





GROW YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND MAKE FRIENDSHIPS THAT LAST A LIFETIME

YOUTH LEADERSHIP NETWORK FALL MEETING SCHEDULE

JANUARY 26, 2026
7-8 P.M.
UNO CEC

FEBRUARY 23, 2026
7-8 P.M.
UNO CEC

MARCH 16, 2026
7-8 P.M.
UNO CEC

APRIL 20, 2026
7-8 P.M.
UNO CEC

EXTRA MEETINGS AS NEEDED

YOUTH ADVOCACY DAY AT THE STATE CAPITOL SPRING 2025

YOUTH LEADERSHIP RETREAT SUMMER 2026

HOW TO JOIN

The Youth Leadership Network is open to all Omaha-area youth in grades 8 through 12 who want to grow as leaders and are interested in preventing alcohol-related harms in our community with the skills they develop. To indicate your interest in joining us for our next meeting, please fill out the form using the QR code below. YLN is completely free to join!



Register here!

WHERE WE MEET

The Youth Leadership Network meetings are held once a month at the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center (CEC) on the University of Nebraska-Omaha campus at 6400 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE. Parking is free and food and drinks are provided at each meeting (must register for food).

LEARN MORE!

To learn more about the Youth Leadership Network, please visit www.projectextramile.org/youth or contact us at youth@projectextramile.org or (402) 963-9047

Find us on:



REGISTER NOW

DEADLINE IS MAY 20, 2026

Registration is available on the Project Extra Mile website.

www.projectextramile.org

If you have any questions please reach out to us.

Phone 402-963-9047

E-mail info@projectextramile.org



Nigel has developed and delivered unique, customized prevention trainings to youth across the U.S. since 1999. He works with groups of young people and their allies to influence policy, advocate for social change, build leadership skills, and summon the courage to act consciously from their core principles. He works with grassroots prevention coalitions around the U.S. as they develop strategic plans for supporting and engaging youth. He has taught courses in psychopharmacology, media studies, substance abuse prevention, and community organizing at the University of Oregon and Portland Community College.



NIGEL WRANGHAM

Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor
Level II and Certified Prevention
Specialist



2026

projectextramile
PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM

YOUTH LEADERSHIP RETREAT

June 1 - 3 | Haven 150
12370 S 150th St. Omaha, NE



DISCOVER your role in preventing underage drinking in a fun and interactive way.

IDENTIFY local issues facing young people and develop the skills to advocate for change.

LEARN how advertising and media play influence underage alcohol use and find ways we can spread our message.



OVERVIEW

Do you want to share your ideas about making positive changes in the community?

Join us and learn how to collect and analyze community data, develop recommendations and engage policy makers.

- **Check in will be at 6:00 pm on June 1st.**

- **Training will be all day on the 2nd and conclude at noon on the 3rd.**

- **Each day the students will be involved in interactive training sessions and fun activities.**



- **Apply Today:**

Space is limited to 20 participants, so register early! You will not want to miss this!

- **Who Can Attend:**

Students entering 8th-12th grades next year.

- **Cost:**

All Students: \$100

Includes 2 nights lodging, meals, and t-shirt. Scholarships to attend are available by contacting Project Extra Mile.

REGISTRATION IS DUE MAY 20, 2026





RESEARCH SUMMARY
Date Compiled: March 2026

Key takeaways from included research:

- Using data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, researchers analyzed responses from 20,005 U.S. adolescents ages 14 to 18 to examine how exposure to neighborhood violence relates to substance use. They found 21.9% of teens reporting alcohol use, 18.6% reporting vaping, and 17.7% reported marijuana use. They also determined that those exposed to neighborhood violence had significantly higher odds of using cigarettes, alcohol, vaping products, marijuana, and misusing prescription opioids. The findings suggest that improving neighborhood safety may help reduce adolescent substance use, although the cross-sectional design does not prove cause and effect.
- A small study of 68 college students showed that those who paid more attention to or chose to watch beer ads were more likely to crave beer and drink more of it in a later taste test. In both cases, craving explained the link between ad bias and drinking, suggesting that alcohol ads may increase consumption by increasing the desire to drink.
- In a survey of 382 Australian teens ages 15–17, researchers found that those who had seen and liked ads for zero-alcohol drinks were more likely to have positive attitudes toward and stronger intentions to drink alcohol from the same parent brands. These associations remained even after accounting for prior alcohol use and other factors. The findings suggest that zero-alcohol ads may act as indirect marketing for alcoholic products and should warrant inclusion in alcohol advertising regulations.
- A new study wanted to examine the extent to which celebrities promote their alcohol brands on Instagram, whether they disclose the content as sponsored, and whether the posts were visible to underage users. Of 112 celebrities who own alcohol brands, they found that most promoted them on Instagram, but only 1.7% of those posts clearly disclosed them as sponsored content. Nearly all alcohol-related posts were visible to a simulated 15-year-old account, raising concerns about youth exposure and the need for stronger social media regulations.

Study finds 98% of celebrity alcohol posts visible to a 15-year-old

Written by La Trobe University

Celebrity actors, musicians and athletes are promoting their own alcohol products on Instagram without clear disclosure of advertising content—and almost all posts are visible to underage users, according to new research from La Trobe University's Center for Alcohol Policy Research.

The study published in *Pediatrics* analyzed more than 85,000 Instagram posts from 112 celebrities who own alcohol brands to identify how often they posted about their products. The team then used a simulated social media account of a 15-year-old to determine whether the branded posts were visible to underage users.

Between 2020 and 2023, the researchers found 3 in 4 of the identified celebrities (75%) mentioned their own alcohol brand in at least one Instagram post and nearly 38% explicitly referenced their brand in their biography.

Celebrities promoted a total of 133 alcohol brands including wine (22%), whiskey (19%) and tequila (16%).

Lead author and graduate researcher Gedefaw Alen said the findings raised serious concerns about youth exposure to harmful alcohol marketing online, as millions of young people viewed posts from their favorite social media influencers every day.

"Almost 98% of celebrity alcohol-branded posts were accessible to the account we set up for a 15-year-old, who would be well below the legal drinking age in Australia and in most countries," Alen said. "These posts combined generated over 1 billion likes and 7.5 million comments, which highlights their pervasive reach and influence."

Overall, the study found 3.4% of identified posts mentioned a celebrity's alcohol brand, but only 1.7% of alcohol-branded posts included a clear caption #ad, "sponsored post" or "paid partnership."

Under the Australian Ad Standards industry Code of Ethics, advertising must always be distinguishable from content. This rule applies to all advertising, including influencer posts in social media.

Alen said research had shown celebrity-endorsed alcohol promotions were more influential than traditional marketing and were associated with early initiation to risky drinking among adolescents and young adults.

Professor Emmanuel Kuntsche, Director of the Center for Alcohol Policy Research, said the study highlighted a significant gap in social media platform policies and industry self-regulation, especially around own-brand influencer promotions. "Current age-gating and paid advertising disclosure rules on social media are failing young people.

"Stronger government regulation is needed to protect teens. Regardless of whether influencers promote their own or another company's alcohol products, we must ensure alcohol-branded posts are clearly disclosed as advertising and are hidden from users below the minimum legal purchasing age."

Despite Australian guidelines recommending people under 18 should not drink alcohol to reduce their risk of injury and harm, the National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022–2023 showed 1 in 3 people aged 14 to 17 consumed alcohol.

Council asks for additional review of north Omaha store's liquor license; Neighborhood pushes back

Written by Aaron Hegarty

OMAHA, Neb. — Tuesday, the Omaha City Council voted 6-1 to require T&A Grocery to submit a "longform" application for a liquor license.

The store, at 42nd and Bedford and recently renamed from JNJ Grocery, had two shootings just outside the store in September last year. Police told KETV then that the area is a crime hotspot and noted an "uptick."

OPD sees crime 'uptick' near 42nd Street and Bedford Avenue

Councilmember LaVonya Goodwin says the council's law committee reviews licenses monthly. She pointed to a high amount of crime in the area as a reason for additional review.

The council's vote came after several community members expressed support for T&A Grocery at the meeting. They said the store does not cause the crime in the area, and praised it for providing friendly service and hosting community events.

Goodwin said many of her constituents have told her about their concerns. She expects they'd attend a future council hearing in which the council would vote on a recommendation to the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission on whether the application should be approved.

A city attorney's note on Tuesday's vote noted that "the only question at this time is whether there is sufficient reason to investigate to see if the licensee no longer meets the license qualifications."

The letter also noted T&A failed a compliance check and sold alcohol to a minor last year. The city clarified during the council meeting that the sale to a minor occurred at a different location, which they believe is associated with the 42nd and Bedford ownership.

Goodwin and other councilmembers said their votes do not mean they'll ultimately vote not to recommend approval of the application to the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission.

Goodwin said it's "not an act of hostility, but rather an act of stewardship." She said it's the city's responsibility to do everything in its power to reduce crime.

The attorney for T&A Grocery, David Houghton, highlighted the lack of other grocery options for the community.

He added, "If you pull the liquor license ... he cannot stay in business. And an empty, vacant building is not going to stop the crime in the area."

The store's owner said he is willing to work with the city to combat crime in the area. He told the council that he added more cameras, lighting, and trespassing signs at the request of the police.

Brinker Harding was the lone vote against the measure.

Houghton told the council that the vote sends a strong message against the store, but a city attorney disagreed, stating that the council will take another recommendation vote on the store.

Norfolk city councilman apologizes after DUI arrest, decides against third term

Written by Abigail Carrera

NORFOLK, Neb. (KOLN) - A Norfolk city councilman issued a public apology after he was accused of driving under the influence.

Ward 4 city councilman Andrew McCarthy said he was pulled over and detained for a DUI on Tuesday night.

"I am truly sorry for any embarrassment, inconvenience, or added work load to Brenda & my family, my staff, the citizens of Ward 4, City of Norfolk and the Norfolk PD. Like any other citizen, I will accept any consequences and will follow them, as I should be treated no different," McCarthy said.

In the same social media post, McCarthy shared he will not be seeking a third term. He is looking forward to spending more time with his family and business.

"I will continue to work as hard as I can in any role to continue to make Norfolk the best for its citizens and businesses," he said.

What Alcohol Does to the Body

Written by Dana G Smith

Dry January has come and gone, but Americans' relationship with drinking is undergoing a more lasting change. According to one recent poll, just 54 percent of U.S. adults said they consume alcohol, the smallest percentage in nearly 90 years of data collection. That may be because more people are taking alcohol's negative health consequences seriously.

Drinking alcohol can have profound effects on the brain and body. In the moment, some of those effects can be pleasurable. But in the long term, especially when it's consumed in large quantities, alcohol can cause serious health harms.

Here's an inside look at what alcohol does to the body, both while you're drinking and over time.

In the Brain

Alcohol has a rapid effect in the brain, causing people to feel more relaxed and sociable.

That buzzed feeling stems from alcohol's interactions with several important neurochemicals.

Drinking temporarily increases levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which is partly why people feel good when they have a few drinks. It's also a primary reason why alcohol can be addictive for some.

Alcohol also changes the activity of two neurotransmitters, called glutamate and GABA, that act like the gas and the brakes in the brain. By increasing the effects of GABA (the brakes) and decreasing the effects of glutamate (the gas), alcohol suppresses brain activity.

When brain activity, especially in the frontal cortex, is inhibited, your actions become disinhibited. That's why you don't have as much self-control when you drink and may say or do things you wouldn't otherwise (like that karaoke solo).

It also causes you to have less control over your motor skills, which is why it's so dangerous to drink and drive. If a person consumes very high levels of alcohol, brain activity can be suppressed to the point of unconsciousness.

Over the long term, alcohol use is associated with changes in brain structure. Some studies have found that middle-aged and older adults who average even one drink a day tend to have slightly less brain volume than people who don't drink. And the more alcohol someone consumes, the more the brain shrinks. Experts don't know exactly why that is, but one theory is that alcohol alters the brain's immune system, ramping up inflammation, which can damage neurons.

In the Mouth and Neck

The tissues that are most at risk from drinking tend to be the ones that come into direct contact with alcohol, including in the mouth and neck.

Alcohol is primarily metabolized in the liver, but the process also occurs in the digestive tract. As soon as alcohol passes through the mouth, it starts to be broken down.

Microbes in the mouth begin to convert alcohol into a compound called acetaldehyde, which then hangs around in the saliva.

Acetaldehyde is nasty stuff. It causes oxidative stress in the cells, which can result in inflammation and tissue damage.

It's also a carcinogen that can modify DNA, potentially leading to cancer-causing mutations.

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of four types of cancer in the mouth and upper digestive tract: oral, pharyngeal (throat), laryngeal (voice box) and esophageal. The mouth, throat and esophagus are particularly vulnerable since those tissues have some of the greatest exposure to acetaldehyde. According to one analysis, the risk of mouth and throat cancers increases by 13 percent and the risk of esophageal cancer by 26 percent with just one drink per day. For people who have five or more drinks a day, the risk of all three cancers is roughly four times higher.

In the Heart and Chest

A few decades ago, scientists thought alcohol might benefit heart health. But that perspective has changed among some experts in recent years as more research has come to light.

Alcohol affects the cardiovascular system in a number of ways, some better understood than others.

While you're drinking, alcohol causes blood vessels to dilate, bringing blood to the surface of the skin. That's why people can look flushed and feel warm when they have a cocktail. Dilation is also thought to be one reason heart rate slightly increases and blood pressure slightly decreases, both temporarily, as you imbibe.

Regular alcohol use is associated with higher blood pressure and an increased risk of hypertension. One reason for this could be alcohol's damaging effect on the cells that line the blood vessels.

Alcohol can also disrupt the heart's electrical system. Research shows that heavy drinking can cause atrial fibrillation, and some studies suggest that the risk goes up slightly starting at one drink per day. People with atrial fibrillation are more likely to have an arrhythmia event on days that they drink.

For women, regularly having one drink a day increases the odds of developing breast cancer by 10 percent, and two drinks a day raises them by 19 percent. Experts think this may partly be because alcohol increases estrogen levels in the body.

Alcohol's relationship to heart attack and stroke is more complicated. Heavy drinking (three or more drinks per day) is associated with a higher risk of both. But when it comes to light to moderate drinking (two drinks a day or less), the research is mixed. A few studies suggest a small increased risk of heart attack and stroke starting at one drink a day, but several others report that people who drink in moderation actually have a reduced risk, compared with people who don't drink at all.

In the Gut

Like the mouth and throat, the stomach and intestines come into direct contact with alcohol and acetaldehyde, making them particularly susceptible to damage.

Alcohol's effects on the gut range from unpleasant to potentially deadly.

When you drink, the valve that separates the stomach from the esophagus relaxes, sometimes resulting in acid reflux.

Alcohol can also cause inflammation in the lining of the stomach, which is why you might have gastrointestinal distress after a night of heavy drinking.

Long term, heavy alcohol use can damage the intestinal lining, leading to gastrointestinal bleeding and "leaky gut syndrome," where food and microbes escape the intestines and enter the bloodstream.

Tissues in the gastrointestinal tract are also prone to alcohol-related cancer. One recent study found that people who consistently averaged two or more drinks per day had a 25 percent increased risk of developing colorectal cancer compared with people who averaged less than one weekly drink.

In the Liver

The liver may be the organ most vulnerable to damage from drinking, and alcohol-related liver disease is the leading cause of death from excessive drinking.

After alcohol is digested in the stomach and intestines, it enters the bloodstream and heads to the liver — the primary place alcohol is metabolized in the body.

Enzymes in the liver convert alcohol into acetaldehyde, which wreaks havoc on cells until other enzymes break it down into a more benign compound called acetate. Other organs turn acetate into water and carbon dioxide to be expelled from the body.

In response to the damage caused by acetaldehyde, fat deposits start to build up in the liver, resulting in fatty liver disease, or steatosis.

Those fat deposits can cause an inflammatory response, leading to the second stage of liver disease, steatohepatitis.

If the inflammation goes on for too long, scar tissue, called fibrosis, can develop, which could lead to liver cirrhosis and potentially liver failure.

According to one estimate, 90 percent of people who consume more than four drinks per day have fat deposits on their liver, and 30 percent of people who regularly have three or more drinks a day will develop cirrhosis. The fat deposits, inflammation and early fibrosis can be reversed, but advanced liver cirrhosis is permanent.

Like in other parts of the body, heavy drinking also increases the risk of cancer in the liver, because of the DNA damage caused by acetaldehyde.

The facts are sobering, but take note: Experts say that the odds of experiencing health harms from drinking are relatively low if you average one drink a day or less.

The risks go up at eight to 14 weekly drinks, but whether those heightened risks result in an illness often depends on people's genetics and pre-existing conditions. And if you currently drink heavily, research shows that some of the damage can be reversed if you stop or cut back.

Liquor stores seek delay as Kansas City debates single-serve alcohol restrictions

Written by Nick Sloan

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Liquor store and convenience store owners in Kansas City are pushing back against a proposed ordinance that would limit the sale of single-serve alcohol products in certain parts of the city.

Mayor Quinton Lucas introduced Ordinance 260250 last week. The proposal would restrict the sale of small bottles of alcohol, including shooters, half-pints and airplane bottles, in designated areas.

The mayor says crime data and neighborhood complaints support the move.

Business owners, however, say they were not included in early discussions and are asking city leaders to delay action on the ordinance so they can help craft solutions.

“I think the solution is a collaborative issue with city, policing, ordinances, city council and zoning, that allow things to take place because a lot of business owners do reach out to get help,” said Kay White of WW Crown Convenience Store.

Under the proposal, the restrictions would apply in specific impact areas identified by the city.

A new Chicago liquor tax on alcohol sold in stores now in effect. Here's how it works

Written by NBC Chicago staff

A new liquor tax for alcohol sold at retail stores in Chicago is now in effect, which means your beer, wine and other booze may start to cost more.

According to the city of Chicago, a new 1.5% tax on liquor officially went into effect Sunday. The tax, which replaces the previous per-gallon tax on retailers, was delayed by two months to give shops more time to implement the new system.

The new tax applies specifically to customers who are purchasing alcohol meant to be consumed off the premises where it is sold. At places like restaurants, bars and venues, where alcohol is meant to be consumed on-site, the per-gallon tax will apply, officials said.

"Each retailer of alcoholic beverages for consumption off the premises is required to collect the 1.5% tax from the purchaser at the time the sale is made," the city said.

Numerous other home rule communities in the state of Illinois already have taxes assessed on retail alcohol sales, including Bloomington.

The state of Illinois also assesses taxes on liquor retailers and wholesale distributors for liquor, with the state collecting more than \$300 million in taxes on liquor in fiscal year 2025 according to the Illinois Policy Institute.

That money is separate from the new tax being assessed in Chicago, which will automatically be added to customers' receipts at checkout.

Alcohol-warning labels and pricing could prevent cancer deaths

Written by University of Victoria

If Canadian jurisdictions mandated warning labels on alcohol and minimum pricing tied to the number of standard drinks in a container, it could prevent hundreds of cancer diagnoses and deaths, according to a new study led by University of Victoria's Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR).

The research, published in *Lancet Public Health*, set out to see how different alcohol policy scenarios could potentially reduce the number of alcohol-related cancers in Canada. The researchers looked at five scenarios: two involving setting price minimums tied to standard drinks in a container - also known as minimum unit pricing-with prices set at \$1.75 and \$2.00 per standard drink; a warning label with rotating messages and one that just warned against alcohol and cancer risk; and one that combined the \$2.00 minimum unit price with a cancer warning label.

"These are evidence-based policies that jurisdictions are considering - there's a cancer-warning bill in the Canadian Senate right now, and some provinces have implemented or are thinking about implementing minimum unit pricing - but they're under-used. We wanted to see just how big of a difference bringing in these policies could make in reducing alcohol-related cancers." -- Adam Sherk, CISUR scientist and study's lead author

Researchers used modeling to see the impact these policy changes could have on cancer incidences and deaths. The combination of a \$2.00 minimum price and a cancer warning showed the strongest reduction, leading to 674 fewer cancer cases (down to 8,824 from 9,498) and 216 fewer deaths (going from 3,866 to 3,617) once the effects were fully realized. The reduction was largest in lower-income populations and younger age groups.

"We believe this is the first study to model the impacts of warning labels on cancer cases and deaths, but cancers are just one of many potential health harms related to drinking," says Sherk. "If you included the many other alcohol-caused harms, like accidents or liver disease, the reduction in deaths would be even higher."

This research was supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Catalyst Grant: Alcohol research to inform health policies and interventions, and was done in collaboration with researchers at the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) and Public Health Ontario.