



## The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms

### Going the Distance: Omaha City Council Vote to Cancel Problem Bar's Liquor License

*Will the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission follow suit?*



The Krush Ultra Lounge, formerly known as Throwback Arcade Lounge, located at 1402 Howard Street in Omaha, has been in the news for [assaults and disturbances](#) in and outside the business for several years and a [shooting](#). The business has also been before the city council and Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (LCC) on several occasions to address these problems. The LCC held two hearings on January 7, 2025, regarding violations to comply with a

Commission order for alcohol being served after 1:00 a.m. While one citation was dismissed, the business plead guilty to the other and received a 30-day suspension. Other violations have been reduced to mandatory meetings – typically a verbal scolding with the goal of course correcting without an actual penalty.

Despite several attempts to bring the business into compliance with all laws, regulations, and orders of the Commission, the message has apparently fallen on deaf ears as issues persist. This led the Omaha City Council to consider whether the business's liquor license should be canceled at a hearing on February 11th. The hearing lasted 4.5 hours with presentations from the licensee's attorney, the City of Omaha Law Department, the Omaha Police Department, as well as a representative from the Omaha Downtown Improvement District. Both sides reviewed approximately 40 exhibits including tavern reports, officer body camera footage, and recordings of 911 calls. According to the city, the business has been a constant drain on law enforcement resources and a safety hazard to patrons and the surrounding community. Law enforcement have devoted extra resources to observe the business and attempt to prevent problems from occurring. The city also complained about the business not closing that the LCC-ordered time of 1 a.m. (an hour earlier than the city-imposed closing time).

Due to the preponderance of evidence, the city council voted unanimously to cancel the business's liquor license. The attorney has indicated that they will fight this decision at the LCC. During this time, the business will remain in operation. Councilman Danny Begley stated at the hearing, "I have respect for the job that the liquor commissioners do, but I would hope that they would listen to the elected officials who clearly have a connection and live and work and talk to the folks that are around Krush Ultra Lounge." The business

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## Legislative Update



On February 3, five alcohol policy bills had hearings in the General Affairs committee. Senator Clouse's [LB 178](#) proposes mandatory server alcohol training for all employees engaged in the sale, service, or mixture of alcoholic liquor, in providing security, or in verifying customers' ages. During the hearing, Project Extra Mile expressed support for the bill as a commonsense measure to prevent sales to minors and reduce sales to already intoxicated persons which can result in impaired driving. Recent news stories by the [Omaha World Herald](#) and [Lincoln Journal Star](#) discussed increased impaired driving rates across the state. The bill has been placed on General File with an amendment.

[LB 33](#) proposes removing 'near beer' from the definition of beer, thereby deregulating it and allowing youth to drink it. During the hearing, Senator Hunt explained that this bill was brought to address the concerns of businesses like Dry Spokes, a non-alcohol serving bar. PEM shared that these products would introduce youth to the taste of beer as these products look, taste, and smell like alcoholic beer. The organization also noted that the [Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau \(TTB\)](#) tests products for alcohol content and frequently finds that products are outside regulatory tolerances; specifically, the average overproof malt beverage products were 0.94% alcohol by volume (ABV) above the labeled amount. It was also highlighted that when 'near beer' was briefly deregulated in Nebraska in the late 1980's, students were reported to be consuming these products in school and law enforcement was having to respond to 911 calls about youth drinking and driving which caused the Legislature to reverse course a year after they passed the bill to deregulate it. LB 33 remains in the committee.

[LB 113](#) seeks to expand both the number of retail locations a manufacturer, craft brewery, and micro distillery may own and the amount of product a micro distillery may self-distribute. During the hearing, PEM expressed concerns that increasing these limits would further weaken the three-tier system in Nebraska which prevents market domination, ensures accurate tax collection, and protects public health and safety. Before moving the bill to General File, a compromise was proposed to limit the number of retail locations to 8 and gallons for self-distribution to 3,500. The bill and amendment are currently being debated on the floor of the legislature with the potential need to reduce the proposed increases due to opposition within the body.

[LB 330](#) seeks to increase the sales tax on alcoholic liquors by 10% with half of the revenue going to the Alcohol Addiction Prevention and Treatment Fund (DHHS will be required to spend the money to prevent and treat alcohol misuse) and the other half to the Education Future Fund (to be used to create more mental health and social work positions in public schools). In addition to funding these valuable causes, increasing the price of alcohol will decrease excessive consumption and the associated harms such as impaired driving, crime, sexually transmitted infections, increased economic costs, and cancers. LB 330 has not been set for a hearing.

For more information on these and other bills Project Extra Mile is tracking, and to see our testimony, [please visit our website](#).

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## Traffic Safety Advocates Meet in Kearney for Nebraska Highway Safety Conference

The second annual Highway Safety Conference took place at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney, NE on February 19-20, 2025. Despite the wintery weather conditions, 124 advocates and law enforcement officers gathered to discuss efforts to improve traffic safety and prevent serious injuries and deaths on Nebraska roads. Sessions focused on youth engagement, law enforcement collaborations, community engagement, impaired driving, social media use, and more.

The opening keynote speaker, Jay Otto with Banyan Collaborative, emphasized that traffic safety is a public health issue. The traffic safety culture needs to have shared values and beliefs that then influence behaviors that impact traffic safety. Three key points he emphasized to grow traffic safety culture in Nebraska and nationally are: 1) increase engagement by raising concern and hope; 2) change behaviors/actions/decisions by challenging assumptions; and 3) act with courage by connecting your purpose.

Project Extra Mile was part of a panel discussion with representatives of the Columbus Police Department and Nebraska State Patrol on sharing highway safety messages via social media. While most presentations focused on sharing tips and examples, PEM's presentation also discussed how the organization utilized social media to increase the visibility of underage drinking enforcements that weren't being shared via traditional media sources. The organization began sharing the results on social media immediately after issuing the media release and began tagging agencies that participated in the multi-agency operations, a strategy that greatly increased the audience of the release through both traditional and social media.



Another workshop focused on law enforcement collaboration. Representatives from the Saline and Dodge County Sheriff's Offices shared how they've been able to grow community engagement and collaboration due to the Special Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) grant. The 15 agencies that currently have this grant are required to have two high-visibility enforcement events and the remaining funds can go to community events where motor vehicle safety messages are shared with attendees. These events may include trunk-or-treat events or something as simple as having citizens tour the agency



and learn about traffic safety.

Finally, another important workshop focused on impaired driving and the need to increase the number of Drug Recognition Experts (DRE's) in Nebraska law enforcement agencies. Nationally, there are approximately 1,500 impaired drivers per DRE per year. Nate Grimm with Cop Smart shared that increasing DUI arrests by 10% has the potential to decrease crashes by at least 1%. He also emphasized that increasing the number of DREs will improve overall public safety on the roads. Lt. Milos with the Bellevue Police Department discussed how the academy for DREs works, what they look for when conducting evaluations, and how it has been shortened from 4-5 weeks to approximately 3 weeks to make it more feasible for law enforcement to complete. Grimm also shared that DRE's must have support within the agency to succeed, and just because an officer who is a DRE gets promoted, doesn't mean they should stop being a DRE in their community.

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## Conflicting Reports on Alcohol & Health to Guide Next Iteration of the Dietary Guidelines

Every five years, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) collaborate to release the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) to reflect the newest data as it pertains to the foods and beverages Americans consume and how they can impact their health, including alcoholic beverages. An advisory committee gathers and reviews the research and then provides a report to the USDA and HHS to update the guidelines to reflect scientific updates for the guidelines which are intended to be recommendations for how Americans can eat and drink in a healthier manner. The [current guidelines](#) for alcohol consumption are: if adults ages 21+ consume alcohol, it should be limited to 2 drinks or fewer in a day for a man OR 1 drink or less in a day for a woman.

In recent months, three reports have been released regarding alcohol and its health impacts that are going to impact the new iteration of the dietary guidelines. The Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD) [Alcohol Intake and Health Report](#); the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine \(NASEM\) Alcohol & Health Report](#), and the [Surgeon General's Advisory on Alcohol and Cancer Risk](#). So what are all these reports and what do they mean?

The first is from ICCPUD, which is tasked with providing leadership in federal policy & programming to support state and community activities to prevent and reduce underage drinking. Typically, ICCPUD provides a report on alcohol and health and how it negatively impacts underage youth. According to the ICCPUD report, if the alcohol intake guidelines were equal for men and women at no more than one drink per day, tier risk of alcohol-attributable death is 1 in 1,000, whereas if the guideline remains at no more than two drinks per men, their risk of death increases significantly to 1 in 25.

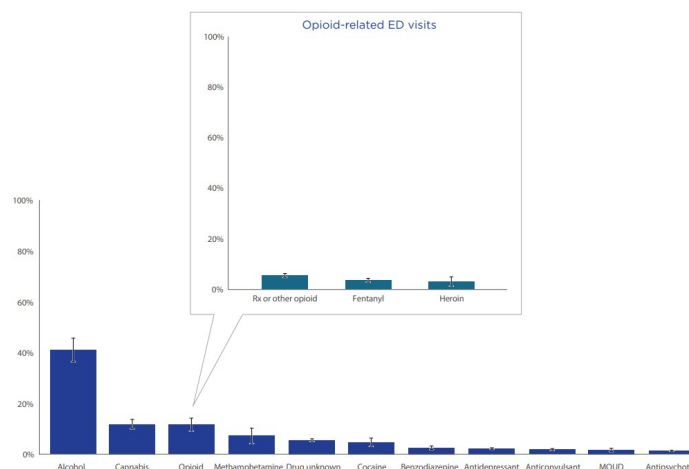
The second is normally handled by HHS or USDA; however, for the upcoming guidelines Congress provided funding to NASEM to examine the relationship between alcohol consumption and health outcomes and provide this information to the Dietary Guidelines advisory committee. It was an unprecedented departure and one that raised concerns within the public health community because of NASEM's industry-friendly approach to the opioid epidemic (it received large donations from the Sackler family, which has been blamed for starting the epidemic). In addition, the NASEM scientific review committee includes scientists that have received funding from the alcohol industry and NASEM also ignored public health recommendations to include expert independent researchers. Unsurprisingly, the NASEM report found some health benefit to moderate drinking but only because it ignored the abstainer bias (studies that grouped 'former drinkers' with 'never drinkers' thereby making abstaining from drinking seem less healthy).

Finally, the Surgeon General recently released an advisory on alcohol and cancer with the goal of reducing alcohol-attributable cancers, including breast, colorectum, esophagus, liver, mouth, throat, and voice box. The Surgeon General recommended that the dietary guidelines taken into account the alcohol-cancer link and the fact that a large majority of Americans (as many as 61%) are unaware that alcohol causes cancer.

The reports/advisories will be considered by the federal scientific review panel as it determines which recommendations to include for the next dietary guidelines which will be

## Research Brief

Figure 4.A Top ten substances involved in drug-related ED visits, 2023



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recently released the newest [Drug Abuse Warning Network \(DAWN\) data](#) which examines drug-related emergency department (ED) visits. The report highlighted that alcohol was the most prevalent substance reported in drug-related ED visits at 41.0% or more than 3.1 million, a 3.6% decrease from 2022; cannabis followed at 11.8% and opioids at 11.6%. Alcohol was also reported to be involved in the highest

number of polysubstance-related ED visits. A majority of the alcohol-involved ED visitors were patients aged 26-44, males, and individuals who identified as not Hispanic or Latino.

The new DAWN data can help inform the policies states implement to address alcohol-related harms they are experiencing. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), between 2020-2021 there were over 178,000 alcohol-attributable deaths in the United States as a result of excessive alcohol use and over 4.3 million years of potential life lost. In Nebraska, this equated to 1,001 people and over 22,000 years of potential life lost. Preventing this tragic loss of life and the millions of ED visits can be achieved by focusing on the three [‘Best Buys’ by the World Health Organization](#): (1) increase excise taxes on alcoholic beverages, (2) enact and enforce bans or comprehensive restrictions on exposure to alcohol advertising, and (3) enact and enforce restrictions on the physical availability of alcohol in sales outlets.

## Coalition Spotlight: Russ Zeeb

Russ Zeeb has collaborated with Project Extra Mile since the 1990’s as a Papillion City Council member “when the city passed an ordinance that all underage violations were required to file a long-form application with the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission.”

Motivated to prevent underage alcohol-related crashes and deaths, he supported the creation of the Target Responsibility for Alcohol Connected Emergencies (TRACE) Program which focuses on finding the source of alcohol in underage drinking crashes. In 2013, Russ retired from the Sarpy County Sheriff’s Office after 39 years of service. Following his retirement, he continued his traffic safety focus for six years at the Nebraska Chapter of the National Safety Council. Through this role he helped host mock crashes and wet labs around prom/graduation and holiday seasons. He also assisted the organization by helping to train current law enforcement officers about the TRACE program. When asked about his engagement with the organization he shared, “I feel that teamwork and partnership with Project Extra Mile and other coalitions works wonders [to keep our communities safe]”. We are grateful for Russ’s continued engagement in the coalition.





Meetings are held at  
UNO's Community Engagement Center  
6400 University Drive South



### 2025 Meeting Dates

January 22nd

February 12th

Join us at our  
30th Anniversary  
Recognition Dinner  
on March 12th

April 9th

May 14th

June 11th

No Meeting in July

August 13th

September 10th

October 8th

November 12th

December 10th



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