

Overcoming Barriers to Policy Change: Politics, Progress and the Media



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Background

Numerous states across the country are working to modify state laws concerning house parties where underage youth consume alcohol. Bills making underage drinking on private property illegal, have been introduced with a wide range of success and failure. At the same time, because they cannot wait for state legislatures to act to close these loopholes, communities are working to pass local ordinances.



CT Statutes

Subsection 30-89

- Any minor who possesses alcohol on any street or highway or in any public place or place open to the public, including any club which is open to the public, shall be fined no less than \$200 nor more than \$500



Loopholes

- CT laws address only minors being in possession of alcohol on PUBLIC property
- CT laws address only sale or delivery of alcohol to minors



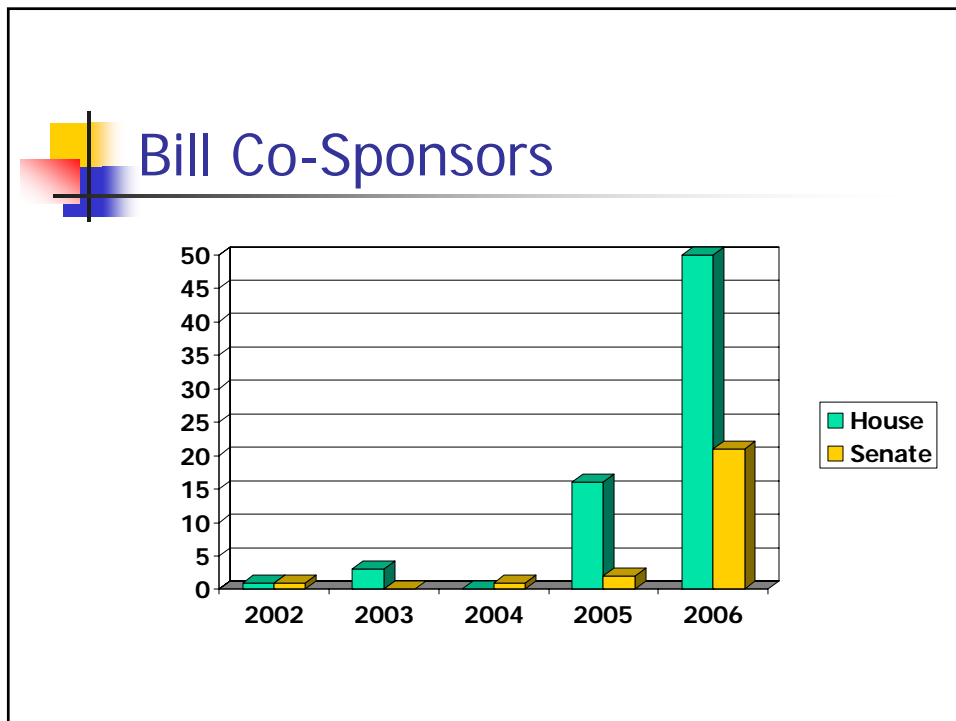
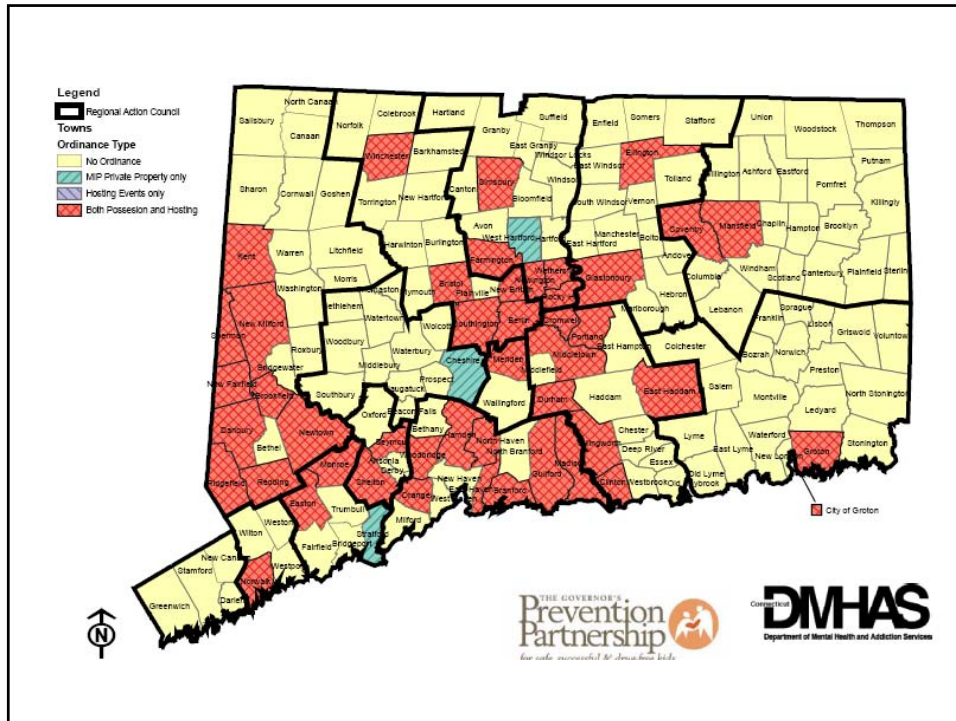
State Efforts

- Past 4 years: Judiciary Committee of CT General Assembly has introduced a bill to address underage drinking at house parties
- 2 co-sponsors in 2002; 18 in 2005
- 2005: Bill voted out of Committee, but did not get to the floor



Barriers

- Attitudes of acceptance
- Law enforcement resources
- Isolated locations
- Lack of controlled party dispersal
- Private property concerns
- Juvenile justice system





What changed?

- Policy workgroup - active
- Media strategy changed
- Website dedicated to bill (real-time)
- E-mail updates to Coalition
- Stories of personal loss
- Presence at Capitol
- Increased support from state agencies



Policy Workgroup

- Members of CCSUD (volunteers)
- Met regularly
 - Face-to-face
 - Conference calls (weekly and as needed)
- Timely communication and updates via e-mail



Media strategy

- Press conference at Capitol
- Press releases related to CCSUD work on bill
- Media had direct contact with CCSUD volunteer leadership
- Release of up to date statistics



Media strategy

- All types of media outlets
- Increased media coverage of underage drinking problem and incidents



Website

- www.housepartybill.org
- Data on underage drinking
- Links to print media
- Links to legislative information
 - Bill tracking
 - Floor debates
 - Public hearings
- Contact information



E-mail updates

- Weekly bill status updates
- More frequent updates to policy workgroup
- Information:
 - Bill progress
 - Supporters
 - Advocacy information



Support from State Agencies and Organizations

- Chief's State's Attorney
- Attorney General
- Association of Chiefs of Police
- Package Store Owners Association
- CT Prevention Network
- CT Communities for Drug-Free Youth



Support from State Agencies and Organizations

- CT Youth Services Association
- MADD
- Dept of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Office of the Victim Advocate
- Regional Action Councils



Presence at Capitol

- Consistent youth presence
- Public hearings
- Improved linkages between citizens and their own legislators
- Increase in constituents calling legislators
- Easy identification of CCSUD members (shirts)



Presence at Capitol

- Legislator facebook
- Increasingly strong presence as bill moved to floor
- Present at all hours when legislature was in session
- Connection with Senate aides who provided info on daily schedule and access to members



Public Act No. 06-112

- Signed by Governor in June
- Takes effect on 1 October 2006
- Possession of alcohol by minor on public or *private* property is illegal
- Person in possession of, or having control over property are responsible



Public Act No. 06-112

- Adult penalties
 - First offense – infraction
 - Subsequent offense(s) – misdemeanor
- Youth penalties
 - First offense – infraction
 - Subsequent offense(s) - infractions



Next Steps

- Implementation
- Education
- Awareness



For More Information

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www.preventionworksct.org