

Liquor tax a drop in the bucket

At his third and last public meeting on the budget, Gov. Corzine said that he would consider Parent to Parent's proposal for a five-cent increase in the state's alcohol tax to help pay for much-needed addiction treatment. The governor also said, however, that he had some reservations about the tax's effect on working families.

Here is some data that should ease any worries about unfairly burdening working people. For a person who drinks either a gallon of wine or a gallon of spirits a week, the increase would be \$2.60 more a year. A case-a-week beer drinker would pay \$5.85 a year more. The proposed increase would, in effect, be a user tax, with those consuming the most beer, wine or liquor assuming the lion's share of this negligible cost hike.

A solid majority of state residents — two in three — have said that they would support an increase in the alcohol tax if the money went to treatment and prevention programs. Even the head of the state's Licensed Beverage Associations said he could live with a small tax increase if the revenues went to a good cause.

Approximately 3,800 people would have access to treatment that otherwise would not be available to them. As parents who lost children to addiction because they were not afforded the care they needed, we can think of no better reason for Gov.

Corzine and the state Legislature to pass this small but vital tax increase.

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