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Original Message

From: Michael Hicks [mailto:dmhicks@dhkinc.com]
Sent: Friday, August 15, 2003 4:15 PM
To: nprm@ttb.gov
Subject: Support of TTB Notice #4

15 August 2003

Chief, Regulations and Procedures Division
Tax and Trade Bureau
PO Box 50221
Washington, D.C. 20031-0221

RE: TTB Notice #4

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing in support of the proposed standard of composition for Flavored Malt Beverages ("FMB's"), as set forth by the Tax and Trade Bureau ("TTB") in TTB Notice No. 4 of March 2003. I feel very strongly that not adopting this standard would threaten the integrity of beer in our country.

Presently, there are thousands of amateur brewers making, on average, five gallons of beer each month in more than a hundred different styles. Also, in the past quarter of a century, we have experienced a revival in the brewing industry, from a low of 41 breweries to today's high of more than 1,400 breweries. During the same period there has been a dramatic increase in the number of imported beers available on our shelves. Nowhere in the world can an amateur brewer like myself, find such a wide variety of quality beers.

By gaining knowledge of the art of brewing, we are also able to encourage the unique tastes and features of malt beverages, If all alcohol beverages are reduced to a mixture of flavors produced in a lab with neutral spirits and added carbonation, we will lose many opportunities to pass on a true appreciation for beers and ales in our own homes and in the broader community. Those opportunities are important to encourage moderate and responsible use of alcohol in our society. Throughout history, societies which treated beer and other malt beverages as a special part of meals and social occasions have experienced fewer problems with abusive consumption and the resulting negative consequences.

Without this rule, we could loose all of this beer culture. I feel that this proposed rule is a critical step towards consistent classification of commercial alcoholic

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beverages. Your rule will help to maintain clear and distinct definitions that will guarantee consistent tax, licensing, and distribution policies for each category of alcoholic beverages. This will help ensure the maintenance of the richness and diversity of the brands of beer available

Any alternative to the TTB proposal would likely trigger disruptive state legislative and regulatory actions. These measures could have significant ramifications for the hundreds of small brewers, dozens of importers and thousands of alcohol beverage licensees, most of which are small businesses. The resulting restrictions on diversity and availability would be serious loss for home brewers and all who appreciate the qualities of traditional beers and ales.

I affirm my support for the proposed "0.5% standard" for FMBs and for the integrity of beer. Its consistency with historical interpretations of federal regulations will help maintain an orderly marketplace and the integrity of the beer category. Furthermore, adopting this rule will keep the United States the best place in the world to enjoy quality beer.

Sincerely,

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