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September 22, 2003

P.O. Box 50221  
Washington, DC 20091

Dear Audry Gaddy:

I am writing in regards to the TTB's consideration of raising the percentage of alcohol derived from a malt base in Flavored Malt Beverages. The current debate is to determine whether that standard should be either 90% or 51% with the remaining alcohol flavors derived from grain neutral spirits. I favor the latter.

Most popular brands of FMBs today are formulated with nowhere near the 90% requirement. Indeed, federal policy only requires 25% of the fermentable base in a malt beverage to be malt for the product to be a malt beverage. It seems two very large breweries are driving the 90% proposal. Consumers have voted with their taste buds. The overwhelming majority have chosen brands - Smirnoff ICE, Mike's Hard Lemonade, and Seagram's Coolers to name a few - whose profiles will likely be affected by such a dramatic change in formulation. Such a change is not needed nor is it necessary.

Respectfully,

Ross Schimmels  
Executive Director