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**COALITION APPLAUDS GOVERNOR FOR SIGNING
UNDERAGE DRINKING HOUSE PARTY BILL**

Hartford, CT (July 28, 2006) — The Connecticut Coalition to Stop Underage Drinking praised Governor M. Jodi Rell for signing into law a bill aimed at preventing underage drinking at house parties.

"This law is long overdue," said Linda Degutis, DrPH, Co-Chair of the Coalition. "Connecticut has rates of underage drinking and underage binge drinking which far exceed the national averages. The bill takes positive steps to further restrict youth access to alcohol and protects our young people."

The legislation makes it illegal for someone who owns or controls private property to allow a minor to possess and drink alcohol, or fail to make reasonable efforts to stop a minor from possessing alcohol. A first offense is an infraction. Subsequent offenses carry up to a year in prison, a fine of up to \$500, or both.

"This legislation reinforces the responsibility that adults have to protect children, and to provide an environment that is healthy. Unfortunately, many adults have the mistaken belief that it is somehow "safe" for youth to drink alcohol at house parties – a belief that has resulted in tragic events in many communities in our state," says Degutis.

The law also makes it illegal for a minor to possess alcohol anywhere, rather than just in public places. There are exemptions that allow parents to provide alcohol to their own children and for consumption for religious reasons. For minors in possession of alcohol, the first offense is an infraction while subsequent offenses carry fines between \$200 and \$500.

"This law closes a glaring loophole in our underage drinking laws which allows children to drink on private property" Degutis added. "The bill reinforces that the minimum legal drinking age in Connecticut is 21 and encourages our youth to make wise decisions to not drink."

The bill sponsored by the Coalition was introduced by the Judiciary Committee. More than 70 legislators co-sponsored the measure which becomes effective October 1.

Connecticut then joins more than 20 states that prohibit the hosting of underage drinking parties and 44 states that limit underage drinking on private property. The Connecticut Coalition to Stop Underage Drinking has actively pushed this legislation aimed at protecting lives and preventing unnecessary alcohol-related tragedies for the past five years.

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The Connecticut Coalition to Stop Underage Drinking (CCSUD) comprises more than 700 public and private organizations and individuals. A program of The Governor's Prevention Partnership, the CCSUD seeks to reduce underage drinking in Connecticut by making long-term change in the social factors that contribute to it. For information about the bill, visit www.HousePartyBill.org.