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Center for Alcohol Policy Applauds Alcohol Awareness Initiatives *Federal Government and Entertainment Industry Highlight Dangers of Underage Drinking*

ALEXANDRIA, VA – As national Alcohol Awareness Month gets underway, the Center for Alcohol Policy recognizes efforts by the federal government and the entertainment industry to raise awareness about the serious issue of underage drinking and its potential consequences.

“Underage drinking is a significant public health threat, and we applaud the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for declaring April as ‘Alcohol Awareness Month’ to spotlight this problem and provide a national platform to address it,” said James E. Hall, a member of the Center for Alcohol Policy Advisory Council and former chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board. “We were pleased to see this important issue highlighted as a storyline in the recent series finale of the popular NBC television program ‘E/R.’ The more people recognize the prevalence and dangers of illegal, underage drinking, the more effectively we can work together to address it.”

NBC’s ‘E/R’ season finale, which ran on April 2, included a plot line centered on a teen who is in a coma and potentially faces permanent brain damage due to alcohol poisoning after a night of binge drinking. The story was based largely on the tragic real-life death of the niece of the show’s executive producer, John Wells.

The Center’s national alcohol policy survey released last year found that 96 percent of respondents aged 21 and older support laws and regulations that are proven to prevent underage drinking and reduce the number of drunk driving fatalities. In that same survey, 78 percent of respondents agreed that relaxing the state-based laws and regulations that work to keep alcohol out of those under the legal drinking age would only make underage alcohol consumption worse.

“Americans need to work collaboratively to reduce underage drinking, and the country needs to maintain the system of alcohol regulations that already exist that prevent youth access,” Hall said. “The responsibility for addressing youth alcohol abuse begins with effective regulation.”

Alcohol Awareness Month is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

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The Center for Alcohol Policy is a 501 c (3) organization whose mission is to educate policy makers, regulators and the public about alcohol, its uniqueness and regulation. By conducting sound and scientific-based research and implementing initiatives that will maintain the appropriate state-based regulation of alcohol, the Center promotes safe and responsible consumption, fights underage drinking and drunk driving and informs key entities about the effects of alcohol consumption. For more information, visit www.centerforalcoholpolicy.org.