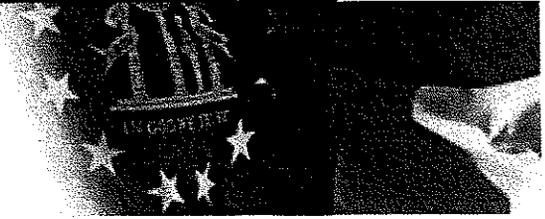




*Governor Sonny Perdue*  
Office of the Governor



### **The Tragic Cost of Sunday Alcohol Sales**

Thursday, March 27, 2008

*An Op-Ed By Governor Sonny Perdue*

Do no harm. It may sound like a simple concept, but it is one that I am afraid supporters of Sunday alcohol sales may have forgotten.

Above all else, I believe it is the responsibility of the Governor and the General Assembly to reject a piece of legislation that hurts more people than it helps. Allowing the sale of alcohol in grocery stores as well as liquor stores on Sundays will do far more harm than good. In fact, other than those who profit from those sales, it will not help anyone.

In the 1990's, the citizens of New Mexico debated the issue of Sunday alcohol sales. On July 1, 1995, most counties in New Mexico began allowing the sale of alcohol on Sundays. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded a study, published in the American Journal of Public Health, to uncover the legislation's long-term effects using data from the first five years that alcohol sales on Sunday were allowed. The study found that legalizing Sunday packaged alcohol sales **"exact[s] a significant price that is paid by crash victims and their loved ones, health care providers, insurers, law enforcement and the judicial systems."**

The sponsors of the New Mexico legislation hoped that allowing sales for off-premise consumption might encourage more people to buy alcohol and drink at home, thus reducing accidents and deaths. This argument was a tempting trap for the state's legislators, and many of our own elected officials are chasing the same carrot without seeing the stick.

Now, I have always been a data-driven decision maker, so let me share the numbers with you. The study found that alcohol-related crashes increased by 29 percent on Sundays in counties that allowed sales. Those additional crashes led to a 42 percent increase in alcohol-related fatalities on Sundays. If we apply these same percentages to Georgia's highways, using 2006 data from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, we can expect approximate increases of 371 alcohol-related crashes and six alcohol-related fatalities per year.

No other day of the week saw a statistically significant change in the percentage of alcohol-related crashes and fatalities after the enacted legislation, according to the study. Counties

that chose not to participate saw their Sunday accident and fatality statistics remain similar to before.

If you have ever comforted the parents or grandparents of a young person lost in a DUI crash, then you know that the cost of this proposal is too great and the damage it stands to inflict is too heavy a burden for innocent families to bear.

I know that Georgians expect me as their Governor to do all that I can to make the people of this state as safe as possible. That's why I have made creating a Safe Georgia one of the cornerstones of my administration, and that's why I will continue to argue against this legislation out of concern for the safety of every Georgian.

I urge the members of the General Assembly to heed the warning conveyed in the final sentence of the New Mexico study, "State legislators should consider [the] consequences when deciding on policy that is intended to serve the public well-being." We owe it to the citizens of this state to consider the cause-and-effect of our actions. There is no doubt that this legislation will make Georgia roads more dangerous. We cannot afford to jeopardize people's lives, nor can we stick our heads in the sand pretending that our actions will have no consequences, even under the guise of letting the people choose.

####

Proponents of Sunday sales like to make it look like Connecticut is the only state opposing such a proposal. We thought you might like to see what other states are doing and how they look at the issue. This is one example, it has facts which pertain to our state.

Connecticut Package Stores Association (CPSA)