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## **Gov. Gregoire joins Liquor Control Board chair to announce ban on alcoholic energy drinks**

**OLYMPIA** – Gov. Chris Gregoire today joined Washington State Liquor Control Board Chair Sharon Foster to announce an emergency rule that bans the sale of alcoholic energy drinks in Washington state.

“At my request, the board this morning voted to ban this new breed of alcoholic drinks in our state. I applaud its members for their action,” Gregoire said. “I was particularly concerned that these drinks tend to target young people. Reports of inexperienced or underage drinkers consuming them in reckless amounts have given us cause for concern.”

The emergency rules will be in effect for 120 days, during which time the WSLCB will seek to make the rules permanent.

The vote comes after nine Central Washington University students became dangerously ill after drinking the alcoholic energy drink Four Loko. Law enforcement officers reported the students had blood alcohol levels ranging from 0.12 to 0.35 percent, more than four times the legal limit. A blood-alcohol concentration of 0.30 percent is considered potentially lethal.

“Quite simply, these drinks are trouble. They contain up to 12 percent alcohol — more than twice the amount found in most beer,” Gregoire said. “Added to that are large amounts of caffeine, which can mask the effects of alcohol. By taking these drinks off the shelves we are saying ‘no’ to irresponsible drinking and taking steps to prevent incidents like the one that made these college students so ill.”

“The board is acting in the interest of public safety,” Foster said. “Following the troubling incidents in Roslyn and in response to increasing reports of problems around the country, the board is acting now to ensure these products do not contribute to a tragedy before the Food and Drug Administration or Legislature can act.”

Research suggests that the combination of caffeine and alcohol create a so-called ‘wide-awake drunk’ and may impair a person’s ability to judge his or her level of intoxication. This can lead to continued consumption of alcohol and risky behaviors such as driving while intoxicated, assaults and other violence. A University of Florida survey of 800 randomly selected, college-age bar patrons found that those who consumed alcohol and caffeine were more intoxicated than those who only had alcohol, and four times more likely to say they wanted to drive home.

Combining stimulants such as caffeine and depressants such as alcohol can place undue strain on the heart and central nervous system, dehydrate the body and hinder the body’s ability to metabolize alcohol. The combination can also cause a depressed respiratory system and vomiting during sleep when the stimulants wear off.

Companies appear to target youth, and use social networking sites, interactive fan websites and product giveaways at events. These products are often sweet and flavored, with brightly colored packaging. They can easily be confused with their energy drink and soft drink counterparts.

For more information on alcoholic energy drinks, visit WSLCB’s website at [www.liq.wa.gov](http://www.liq.wa.gov).

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