

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

September 19, 2017

Social Host Ordinance in the Unincorporated Palos Verdes Peninsula

As noted in our May 9, 2017 motion, Los Angeles County recognizes that the consumption of alcoholic beverages by minors is a persistent problem, and the costs and consequences of underage drinking affect virtually everyone. According to a 2016 study by the American Medical Association, alcohol continues to be the most abused substance for American youth.

In California, more than 40 cities and counties have adopted some form of social host laws. These ordinances can be a key success in reducing the number of parties serving alcohol to minors. Ventura County, for example, passed social host liability laws in all municipalities, including the unincorporated areas of the county. They found that passage of social host laws led to a decrease in alcohol use among youth and a very low rate of citations of party hosts, which is indicative of the added value of the deterrent effect of these laws.

The term "social host" commonly refers to persons aged 18 or above who host parties where alcohol is served to minors on property "social hosts" control. Through social host liability laws, persons aged 18 or above can be held responsible for these

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parties if minors are served, regardless of who furnishes the alcohol. Social host laws hold persons aged 18 or above accountable for allowing underage drinking on private property they control. That is, social host laws make it illegal to provide an environment where underage drinking takes place, irrespective of who provides the alcohol.

Social host laws also facilitate the enforcement of laws prohibiting serving alcohol to minors and preventing minors from consuming alcohol in the first place. Although there are state laws that prohibit persons from serving alcohol to underage drinkers, they are difficult to enforce. Social host laws give communities a practical tool for holding persons aged 18 or above accountable by citing the individual who hosts the underage drinking party instead of merely citing the specific individual that furnished the alcoholic beverage to the minor, which can sometimes be difficult to determine.

Social host liability laws are not strictly punitive; they can also educate homeowners and minors, and raise awareness of and reduce the opportunities for underage alcohol abuse in home party settings.

Cities in the Fourth Supervisorial District that have enacted these laws include Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach and Long Beach as well as the cities of Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes, Rolling Hills and Rolling Hills Estates. These latter four cities are located on the Palos Verdes Peninsula ("Peninsula"). There are two unincorporated communities, Academy Hill and Westfield, and one large condominium complex also in unincorporated County, known as "the Estates," all located on the Peninsula, that lack similar protections. I believe that we should enact a social host ordinance that would apply to those unincorporated areas in order to ensure consistency of laws and uniformity of enforcement on the Peninsula, and to underline

the importance of protecting our youth from the potentially disastrous consequences of binge drinking as well as drinking and driving. A social host liability ordinance specific to the unincorporated area of the Peninsula could also prevent instances of “party migration” into those unincorporated neighboring jurisdictions from the surrounding Peninsula cities with recently enacted social host liability laws.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct County Counsel to draft a social host ordinance to be piloted in the unincorporated County areas known as "Academy Hill," "Westfield," and "the Estates." To the extent authorized by law, the ordinance should consider, among other things, the following:
 - a. The ordinance should mirror similar ordinances in the surrounding cities of Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes, Rolling Hills and Rolling Hills Estates;
 - b. The ordinance should consider alternative methods of punishment, such as community service, which can either supplement or replace monetary fines;
 - c. The ordinance should consider and identify the appropriate County department(s) responsible for its administration, enforcement, contest and appeals process, if any;
 - d. The ordinance should have a sunset date of one-year from the date of adoption.
2. Direct the Department of Public Health, and the Sheriff's Department, in

consultation with other related departments, to evaluate the practical implications of the ordinance and whether its adoption has enhanced the enforcement of the social host liability laws in the Peninsula, and report back in 180 days from the date of its adoption.

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