



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## Westchester Officials Unveil Alarming Trend of Energy Alcoholic Drink Illegally Being Sold to Teens

JEFFREY D. KLEIN August 26, 2010

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*Call for NYS Liquor Authority to investigate harsher penalties for local retailers*

**WESTCHESTER, NY** – Deputy Majority Leader and State Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) joined Tuckahoe Mayor John Fitzpatrick, Bronxville Mayor Mary Marvin, Tuckahoe Police Chief John Costanzo, Bronxville Police Chief Christopher Satriale and James Genova, Project Director of Eastchester Communities that Care Thursday to unveil the most recent results of an ongoing undercover investigation and crackdown into

the illegal sale of alcoholic caffeinated beverages such as *FOUR LOKO* and *JOOSE* to area teens. The lawmakers also called on the SLA to investigate alcoholic beverages being marketed and sold to underage drinkers in New York State.

“The distributors of these drinks are using energy as a disguise to sell alcohol to minors. Plain and simple. Underage drinking is a pervasive and persistent problem that is now exacerbated by the packaging and wide availability of these beverages and it is time to do more to protect the health and welfare of our most vulnerable consumers,” said Deputy Majority Leader and State Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester)

Klein announced that he will introduce legislation in the New York State Senate which seeks to address the deceptive labeling practices used by the manufacturers of the drinks by strengthening the SLA’s ability to review and enact more rigorous labeling standards for beverages that have a combination of two percent alcohol by volume and 5 milligrams of caffeine.

In addition, Klein called for an increase in fines for those caught selling to minors.

“This is a serious problem that is on the rise in our communities. While we continue to police establishments who may be breaking the law, we also want to make clear to parents and educators that this is a disturbing trend which needs to be addressed,” said Tuckahoe Mayor John Fitzpatrick.

“I am joining with my colleagues to inform our constituents both as a mayor and most importantly as a mom of this product. I was not aware of its existence and potency until very recently. It is particularly dangerous because the packaging is so benign that it looks like a soda can, comes in flavors such as watermelon and raspberry lemonade and is often displayed in stores next to the non alcoholic beverages,” said Bronxville Mayor Mary Marvin.

"Four Loko is the alcohol industry's latest weapon aimed directly at teens and families. While we work through legislative action to get this product and other alcoholic caffeinated beverages from being so readily available, I urge business owners to remove this product from their inventory in order to reduce underage drinking in our communities," added James Genova, Project Director of Eastchester Communities that Care.

In the past month, three local teens, have been rushed to hospital emergency rooms after consuming *FOUR LOKO*, which contains 12% alcohol and is classified as a malt beverage

The Tuckahoe Police Department recently issued a summons to one area retailer believed to be selling the beverage to local teens. The citation was part of an ongoing undercover investigation by the Tuckahoe PD this year to identify retailers who are illegally selling alcoholic caffeinated beverages to minors.

"It is important for police to take a two-pronged approach to the problems associated with underage drinking. We must strictly enforce the sale of alcohol to minors and go to our schools and community groups to educate young people and their parents on the dangers of underage drinking," said Tuckahoe Police Chief John Costanzo.

"Clearly, it is imperative for law enforcement to redouble our efforts and expand our arsenal in a collaborative way as we face yet another challenge in the fight against underage drinking, the dangers of alcohol use and those who deceptively provide these dangerous substances," added Bronxville Police Chief Christopher Satriale. "We have always maintained that the safety of our youth and the heightening of awareness among parents are paramount in this effort, and we will continue to work, with a singularly-focused vigilance, toward those ends."