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EMERGENCY SUSPENSION ISSUED FOR CONGRESS TAVERN

Albany, NY – The New York State Liquor Authority (SLA) ordered an emergency suspension of the Congress Tavern at 411 Main Street in Poughkeepsie. The decision to suspend the license is based on the continuing and escalating violence and disorder at the premises including numerous fights, alleged drug activity, and two recent homicides at the premises. The suspension was ordered by Members of the SLA, Chairman Dennis Rosen, Commissioner Jeanique Greene, and Commissioner Noreen Healey at a meeting of the Full Board on Wednesday, May 11, 2011. Effective immediately, no alcohol can be served or consumed on the premises.

On April 24, 2011, City of Poughkeepsie Police officers responded to a report of shots fired near the Congress Tavern. The suspect and the victim, who died as a result of the gunshot wounds, were at the bar immediately prior to the shooting. On May 5, 2011, officers responded again to a report of multiple shots fired. The officers at the scene found the victim dead in the parking lot directly outside the bar, and subsequently discovered the shooting began inside the Congress Tavern.

On May 5, 2011, the SLA received a dozen referrals documenting violent incidents from the Poughkeepsie Police dating back to March of 2009. The incidents demonstrate the bar has become a drain on police resources, and include several reports of shots fired, fights, illicit drug activity, incessant noise, a fatality involving a multiple stabbing, and an assault on a police officer. The SLA charged the Congress Tavern with eight separate and serious violations of the Alcoholic Beverage Control law. Moreover, in spite of the almost constant violence at the bar, the licensee refused to hire trained security guards to address the situation, and instead has armed himself in an attempt to diffuse the matters on his own.

“Bar owners will be held accountable for what transpires inside and around their establishments,” said SLA CEO Trina Mead. “The SLA will continue to take emergency action against licensees who are a drain on police resources and whose inaction pose a threat to public health and safety.”

Background:

The State Administrative Procedure Act authorizes a State agency to summarily suspend a license when the agency finds that public health, safety, or welfare requires emergency action. When the SLA summarily suspends a license, it also serves a Notice of Pleading alleging one or more disciplinary violations. In invoking a summary suspension, the SLA has deemed the violation, considering each licensee's disciplinary history, to be sufficiently serious upon initial review to warrant an immediate suspension. The SLA's decision to summarily suspend a license is not a final determination on the merits of the case. The licensee is entitled to an expedited hearing before an administrative law judge. An order of summary suspension remains in effect until such time as it is modified by the State Liquor Authority or a reviewing Court.

The State Liquor Authority regulates and controls the manufacture, sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages within the state. The Authority works with local law enforcement agencies and localities across the State to ensure compliance with the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law. In addition, the Authority issues and renews licenses and permits to manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers and retailers of alcoholic beverages.

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