**Essay Instructions and Topic**

Writing Prompt Based on Reading Material to Assess a Student’s Critical Thinking Ability

**Essay Directions:**

Please read the passages below that present the pros and cons on the contemporary topic of **Restricting Advertising of Alcoholic Beverages**.

Then answer the following questions by **writing one or more paragraphs (a minimum of 250 words, typed, double spaced)** that **analyze the pro or con position or both**.

1. What is the main purpose of this passage?
2. What is the most important information in the passage?
3. Are there any assumptions underlying the author’s views?
4. If we take this line of reasoning seriously, what are the implications?
5. Is the author’s position convincing and why?

**Pro: Alcoholic Beverage Advertising Should Be Restricted**

Alcohol-industry representatives often cite the incompleteness of the research record on alcohol advertising as proof that alcohol promotion has no impact on consumption. However, to clarify the impact of promotional efforts—efforts on which the industry spends $2 billion annually—indeed researchers have begun to frame questions and pursue studies on the relationship between alcohol advertising and behavior and health. Although more research is needed, there is strong scientific evidence that the effects of alcohol advertising, like the effects of tobacco advertising, are not limited to brand selection by adults. Research conducted by Joel W. Grube and Lawrence Wallack suggests that awareness of TV beer commercials leads to favorable beliefs about drinking in children 10 to 12 years old and increases their intention to drink as adults. Henry Saffer compared motor-vehicle deaths with quarterly measures for broadcast advertising in 75 media markets over a three-year period. He concluded that a ban on broadcast alcohol advertising would save 2,000 to 3,000 people annually from death due to alcohol-related motor-vehicle crashes.

**Source Citation:**

Con: Alcohol Ads Do Not Promote Underage Drinking

Never mind that our drinking laws are absurd. An 18-year-old is presumably mature enough to sign contracts, get married, have an abortion, go to war and decide who is going to run the country. But she or he is three years away from coping with the weighty implications of consuming a can of beer. Nor can a person of age 20, according to the Boies team, possibly resist the allure of a movie star enjoying a brew in a PG-13 film. In the end, how does a brewer or distiller, or a jury for that matter, distinguish an ad that would be suitable for a 21-year-old from an ad that might be construed as impermissibly "targeted" at a 20-year-old?

However serious the problem of underage consumption of beer and liquor, there are countervailing values that are implicated when speech restrictions are proposed.

The choice between preserving core 1st Amendment values and regulating ads for alcoholic beverages is a particularly easy one when there is little evidence of any connection between those ads and underage drinking. We need not sacrifice commercial free speech to reduce alcohol consumption by minors. Nor should we sit back and allow the trial lawyers to add one more notch to their expanding tobacco belt. Their message is simple: The doctrine of personal accountability is out the window. In its place is the insidious notion that you can engage in risky behavior, then force someone else to pay for your mistakes. That message is far more pernicious than any beer or liquor commercial.

Source Citation: