

## The high cost of drinking cheap beer

By Alex Seise

An updated Ewing Township ordinance will mean increased fines or even jail time for underage drinkers, according to Sgt. Gregory Smith of the Ewing Township Police Department.

The revised ordinance imposes a mandatory \$2,000 fine for each underage person charged with an alcohol-related offense. The amount of the fine had previously been left up to the discretion of the judge at trial.

Smith said the ordinance is effective as of this semester.

Smith said the amount listed in the revised ordinance is a "significant increase" from usual fines. The previous Ewing ordinance called for fines up to \$500 and up to 90 days in jail for underage drinking.

Jail time is an option in lieu of the \$2,000 fine for those who are unable to pay.

The ordinance was initially permitted in 2000 by the state of New Jersey. It granted municipal authorities the ability to enforce underage drinking interceptions on private property.

The ordinance specifically targets underage drinking. "I do believe there are plans to go after underage drinking parties," Smith said. "If you are 19 and caught with a beer, you'll have a real problem."

This type of ordinance has already been adopted in communities surrounding other New Jersey colleges. It has been recently adopted in many townships, including Glassboro, New Brunswick and Lawrence. The ordinance allows townships to create measures permitting police to fine underage drinkers on private property. Depending on municipality-specific regulations, this could include Greek and athletic houses.

Bryan Vale, president of the Inter-Greek Council (IGC), said IGC works with the authorities on a case-by-case basis. "Much of our interactions with Ewing residents are done vicariously through the office of Community Standards, and in that case, only when Greek houses are involved," he said.

In addition to the increased fine, Greek organizations could face penalties from IGC.



*[ Media Credit: Michelle McGuinness ]*

*A new Ewing Township ordinance will cost underage drinkers \$2,000 if they are caught with alcohol.*

"(Greek) organizations that violate (College) policy by hosting off-campus events that require police intervention are subject to the judicial process as outlined by our constitution," Vale said. "There are a number of steps in it, with punishments ranging from requirements to put on programming, to losing points in our Greek assessment packet, to contacting their national organization."

The most severe penalties include the loss of program-hosting rights and the possibility of losing recognition as an organization on campus.

"IGC's main role here on campus is to govern and regulate Greek life. Both the IGC and the individual Greek organizations host a multitude of programming to enrich the campus experience," Vale said.

He said Greek organizations have sponsored events at LollaNoBooza as well as hosted rÃ©sumÃ© writing workshops, speakers, movie screenings, discussions and other beneficial programs. "The list truly does not end," Vale said.

The New Jersey Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control Web site notes that one component of the initiative, the Cops in Shops program, allows officers to go undercover in participating locations in order to apprehend underage drinkers and those who procure alcoholic beverages for them.

Another component of the initiative, known as Operation Summer, posts undercover officers in bars in order to apprehend underage drinkers.

Smith noted that an increase in the number of party interceptions so far this semester is typical for the beginning of the academic year. He also said the recently created Ewing Community Watch may have impacted the number of busts, though he said that it is not certain if this is a major factor.