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2009: Public Submissions

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CACTUS Public Submissions

Is it time to change the DRINKING AGE in the United States?

Here's what people think:

Dustin Holt, 4/22/2009:

I feel as if the drinking age in America is a little high. In fact it is one of the highest public drinking ages in the world, 21. In most countrys the drinking age doesnt exceed 16. In Russia, a country we are studying in class, a person can drink in public at the age of 18 but they cant purchase alcohol until they reach 21. I feel that if you can fight for your country at the age of 18 why cant you sit down at a restaurant and have a beer. So i think the age of drinking should be 18, and if we cant stretch the limit this far maybe we can use the Russian antics.

Kirsten, 4/19/2009:

I think that the drinking age should be lowered to the age of 18. European countries only require a drinking age of 16 in most cases, and still have a youthful teen nation that is growing responsible while still having the opportunity to drink. American teens are breaking the rules to drink simply because the rules prohibits them. The simple fact is that teens can and will be rebellious, so by lowering the drinking age you would have have a larger and more responsible youth nation that would be able to drink alcohol and still remain legal.

Vonnie McDaniels, 4/19/2009:

When asked the question should the legal drinking age be at 18 or 21, I've always said that I don't care because I don't like the taste and fell of drinking and smoking, but now I've changed my mind. The Minimum Legal Drinking Age should be set at age 18. The United States is known for its land of freedom and prosperity so how can you deny the freedom of alcohol consumption at the age where you're considered an adult. I mean think about it, at the age of 18 you can: own a home, buy a car, have life insurance, and can even be drafted for war, yet you can't drink alcohol... how hypocritical is that logic? I know that the legal drinking age was set at 21 to try and combat the number of alcohol related deaths in youths: binge drinking, alcohol poisoning, drunken driving etc., as it is raising the MDLA (, or Minimum Legal Drinking Age) had only a temporary effect.

According to 4th report researched by the International Center for Alcohol Policies (or ICAP) in March of 1998 (updated in 2002), the United States passed legislation act call the National Minimum Drinking Age Act of 1984. This act required all states to raise their purchase and public possession of alcohol age to 21, or risk losing federal highway funds under the Federal Highway Aid Act. It wasn't until 1987 that all states complied with the 21 Minimum Legal Drinking Age law. Since that legislation act, there has been a large body of research regarding the impact of raising the MLDA to 21 in the United States. Most of the research focuses specifically on whether the new law has had the desired effect of lowering traffic fatalities. Other

studies have looked at the law's impact on patterns of youth drinking (especially at the college level) and specifically binge drinking. Based on statistics compiled by The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, (NHSTA) "alcohol related" traffic fatalities for people under 21 dropped by 43% (from 5,062 alcohol-related fatalities to 2,883) during the years 1987 through 1996.² This should be seen in context of a 28% drop in "alcohol related" traffic fatalities in the general population. From 1982 through 1986 when minimum purchasing and public possession age laws varied from 18 to 21, alcohol-related traffic fatalities for people under 21 dropped by 14% (from 6,329 alcohol-related fatalities to 5,455).³ Alcohol-related traffic fatalities for the general population during this period dropped by 4%. In NHSTA's view, the minimum 21 age laws "have had greater impact over the years as the drinking ages in the states have increased, affecting more drivers aged 18 to 20." Sounds convincing right...? But take a look at the more recent data given by others. According to a more recent study (at <http://www.voxeu.org/index.php?q=node/532>) conducted in September 5, 2007 by Jeffrey A. Miron, Senior Lecturer on Economics at Harvard University and Elina Tetelbaum, a student at Yale Law School, the MDLA set at the age of 21 had little to no effect at all on the alcohol related deaths among youths. Their research concludes that the MLDA of 21 does not play a significant role in reducing 18-20 year old traffic fatalities, and may have ultimately raised fatalities among younger groups. They exclaim that the proactive adopters of the "MLDA of 21" policy had only a short term effect of lowering the alcohol related deaths among youths. But as of this year (2007) reports show that number of alcohol related deaths among youths has surpass the number of deaths before the 1984 legislation act. The two conclude that increasing the MLDA from 18 to 21 did not reduce traffic fatalities in the US, but it arguably increased the numbers (overtime). Why...? It's because of the rebellious nature of teens between the ages of 16- 19. Like I said I'm not a drinker or smoker... but I am an American and I believe in freedom at the appropriate age. If the appropriate age for drinking is at 21, then every other adult made decision should be at 21. If I'm not right, prove me wrong.

Dan Evans, 4/7/2009:

I am against changing the legal drinking age limit to 18 simply because there are multiple alcoholics in my family who continue to drink. This has caused tremendous turmoil with in the family and some family splits and dislocations as a result. The cost in emotional and psychological damage is great. Why add add more problem drinkers to the number we have to deal with already? I would also be interested in the age distribution of DUI's in Madison County and Kentucky; are more issued to younger people than older? I would imagine that more are younger but this should be verified.

Grandma Becky, 4/4/2009:

I think 18 for wine and beer is fine. Been there. Done that.

James Anderson, 4/4/2009:

Yes, I think we should lower the drinking age to 18. I justify this answer for two reasons: one practical, one philosophical. Before explaining these reasons, I wish to add this statement. I feel that anyone abusing alcohol while in public or while driving should be fully responsible for their action and punishments should be swift and significant.

From a practical standpoint, I feel that people who want alcohol will find a way to get it. Spending police time arresting people who drink responsibly in a legal setting could best be used

to deal with more serious police matters.

From a philosophical view, I believe in no 2/3 or 1/2 people. If a person has reached their majority and can vote and serve in the military, I think they should have all rights of a citizen and all responsibilities.

I am a retired college educator.

Dan Duncan, 4/3/2009:

It seems to me that our present drinking age is wrong. The use of alcohol really should start in the home with a meal. If it were legal for parents to give wine or beer to their children or order it in a restaurant, drinking would lose some of the allure it has at present as 'forbidden fruit'. One does NOT gain immediate wisdom at any specific age. Drinking at home would not solve ALL problems but it would put supervision over early opportunities to imbibe. Along with that, bars must be more responsible in 'cutting off' individuals who have drunk too much. One suggestion that I feel has some merit would be a 'learner's permit' to drink in the presence of a responsible adult much as one learns to drive. Really, the same logic could be applied to drugs today. They ought to be legal but regulated carefully. It would save much money and stop the injustice of unequal jail sentences.

Karen Westerfield, 4/1/2009:

I have read a number of opinions on the pros and cons of lowering the drinking age to 18. I do not believe anything good could come from a reduced drinking age. I read one point stating that one could go fight for his or her country but could not buy a beer. That's true. However, those that go fight for our country spend months training to do just that. They become informed, educated, and well trained to enter into that combat. If the drinking age is lowered, the 18 year old walks into a bar and orders a drink. That's it. No information, no education, and no training are required before you order. If the 18 year old is uninformed, he or she must rely on experience and maturity. The key to the safe enjoyment of alcohol is to ensure that the person is mature enough to make good decisions, such as knowing when enough is enough. Experience and maturity most often come with age.

From a college standpoint, the 18 year old would most likely be a freshman. The first year of college is extremely trying time—dealing with independence, assignment deadlines, time management, and all the other issues that go along with the freshman year. Adding alcohol to this type of situation could worsen an already difficult, stressful time.

There is also the issue of driving under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol is the most common factor in accidents involving teenage drivers. There has been a reduction in alcohol related accidents involving teens since the drinking age was raised to 21. Driving drunk is not the only risk. Overdosing on alcohol kills more teens now than driving fatalities. Alcohol is a toxin that alters how you feel and think—putting you at risk for any number of things. The younger a person begins using alcohol, the greater the chance of developing dependence or abuse some time in their life. Of those who begin drinking at age 18, 16.6% subsequently are classified with alcohol dependence and 7.8% with alcohol abuse. If a person waits until age 21 before taking their first drink, these risks decrease by over 60%. (Journal of Substance Abuse) It seems to me there are more negative points than positive ones on the issue of lowering the drinking age to 18.

Tyler Simpson, 4/1/2009:

I do not believe that the drinking age should be lowered to 18, because at 18 people are not

responsible enough to drink and still be expected to conduct themselves in a respectable manner. Also it is proven that at 18 years of age one's brain is not fully developed, and the consumption of alcohol can hinder this development. If the drinking age were to be lowered more and more teenagers would pick up drinking earlier. If an 18 year old wanted to drink now they easily could, and if we make it legal the consumption of alcohol will happen more often. I feel that the drinking age should stay the same because it will prevent an increase in the number of drunk driving accidents per year.

Kayleigh Norris, 4/1/2009:

I do not agree with lowering the drinking age. The people Europe have had the laws of 18 being the drinking age for a long time. If we change the drinking age now many people will be in danger. We are not ready for this change. The accident rate would be so much higher too. The age of 18 is very dangerous because they have only been driving for about two years. This change could be very dangerous and many people that are young may want this change because they want freedom. However, parents and many others will agree with me when we say we love the people in our lives. I feel if we love the people around us we would be more concerned with their lives. With this change the rate of drunk driving accidents will increase so much, because at the age of 18 we are not responsible enough to handle this kind of freedom.

Jennifer Moore, 3/31/2009:

I am currently a EKU student in the Nursing program. I disagree with lowering the legal drinking age for many reasons which some people have already mentioned below. After researching a few statistics I learned that about 5000 underage people die a year due to drinking. Studies have shown that youth who are involved in drinking are more likely to skip out of school and get bad grades as well as have social problems like fights and getting arrested. We should be focused on creating more programs presented to kids as early as grade school about the harmful effects of drinking. I agree with aureole about alcoholism as a disease. He made a good point about the disease only occurring after you have consumed alcohol. Kids should be educated about this kind of valuable information. We should do everything we can to get kids to develop their hopes and dreams and help them reach those goals by educating them on the things that will get in the way of their accomplishments like drinking.

Some have argued that the age should be lowered because a 18 year old can buy a house but how many 18 year olds do you know that actually own homes. Not many because to buy a house you have to have good credit and most teens are supported by their parents and have not had the opportunity or are not responsible enough to have already built up their credit. It was also said that if teens want to drink then they can get it from others like family and friends and we know this is true so why is it necessary for the age to be lowered if they already have access to it. The issue is not that they want it because they cannot have it, it is the fact that the family and friends they are getting it from are the ones encouraging them. We need to set good example for our youth.

I think that the recent tax increase on alcohol and cigarettes is a positive change to our society. Several of my coworkers have already started their journey to permanently quit smoking due to the cost. If there is anything good that has come out of the current economic situation it is that people are not able to afford as much alcohol and cigarettes and are having to reduce or eliminate that expense. Studies have also shown that the earlier an individual began drinking alcohol, the greater the degree of alcohol intoxication experienced routinely on typical drinking occasions in

adulthood. If you do the research you will discover a plethora of reasons the age should not be lowered. For a healthy and successful future of our youth we should not lower the drinking age.

Brittany Bennett, 3/31/2009:

I think lowering the legal drinking age from 21 to 18 would be a horrible mistake. Kids at 18 are still too young and too immature to take on the challenge of drinking responsibly. Kids at 18 have only been behind the wheel of a car for two years and that is dangerous enough without having to add in easy access to alcohol. Yes, kids of all ages can get access to alcohol in some way but in most cases it is a challenge. Imagine the number of car accidents involving teenagers 18-21 that would go up in this country because of their access to legal alcohol. These kids are also in most cases just graduating high school and going off to college to live on their own for the first time. The last thing they need is alcohol influencing their lives so easily at such a young age, especially for the ones in college.

Mark Mitchell, 3/31/2009:

The debate over whether or not the drinking age should be lowered to 18 is a debate that is going to continue for a very long time. However the answer is very simple. Yes, the legal drinking age should be lowered to 18. At age 18 citizens of the United States are considered legal adults. As adults: we are able to be drafted to fight and die for our country; we are able to gamble our life savings away; we face the consequences of criminal behavior; we make all of our own decisions without having to get the permission of our legal guardian. This shows that in the eyes of the government we are responsible to make our own decisions in life. So why does the government make us wait until we're 21 to make the decision to drink alcohol?

Many teenagers today ask their-selves this exact question. They cannot come up with a viable answer. So many adult teenagers take it upon their-selves to break this law because they feel it is an unjust law. Many teenagers get a thrill out of breaking the law and getting away with it. Also, the reality of the situation is that an overwhelming majority of teenagers are going to drink no matter what the law is. These teenagers have to sneak around parents and authorities in order to not get into trouble. This causes them to drink in excess amounts when they get the chance to drink, and it causes them to binge drink so they can get drunk quickly.

If the government lowers the drinking age to 18 it is going to allow for young adults to drink in a safe environment. It will allow them to drink responsibly and not sneak around. They will be able to sit and have a drink with parents and other responsible adults who can show them the responsible way to drink. Lowering the drinking age will also take away the thrill of drinking just to break the law.

Irresponsible teenaged adults who want to drink are going to find a way to get alcohol and drink no matter what the law is. So why not allow responsible teenaged adults, who follow laws, to drink when they are mature enough to drink responsibly?

Ryan Neu, 3/31/2009:

Our generation(s) have seen alcohol as a pass time or a way to have fun with friends. This is a major issue when it comes to safety. I believe that if we lower the drinking age it will make alcohol more of a beverage. It is seen in Germany that if you treat it like a beverage and don't deny alcohol to late teens it can be a beverage instead of a pass time. If we can portray this view to teens now we can save lives and keep teens from getting DUI's or being put in jail for using alcohol. Studies have shown that when the drinking age was brought down to 18 that alcohol

related injuries have decreased. This is not true for all studies but for most. This could be for the reason that when the drinking age was brought down the generation it was tested on could have not been ready to see it as a beverage. I believe that enough time has passed and we should lower the drinking age so that our generations to come can drink alcohol with consideration that it is not to be abused.

Lauren Saleba, 3/31/2009:

The drinking age has been a hot topic in the United States for a couple of years now. A lot of younger people believe that it is time to lower the drinking age to eighteen, while older people believe that eighteen year olds are not mature enough to handle that responsibility.

In today's society kids are growing up faster. They are faced with more challenges than ever. At eighteen they graduate high school and start college, or get a job. At eighteen "kids" turn in to adults according to the United States. They are allowed to vote, go to war, buy cigarettes, and have already been driving for almost two years. Suddenly a whole new world is opened up for young adults, and they have a lot of responsibility handed to them. Why not drinking? We are one of the only countries that have the drinking age over the age of eighteen. In Europe kids are allowed to start drinking at age sixteen, in Canada you can drink at age eighteen. The reason these kids are allowed to drink at such a young age is because they are taught how to know their limits, and how much is acceptable to drink. They learn their boundaries at a younger age. In Europe a child is allowed to have a sip of wine at the dinner table. By introducing alcohol early in life, they learn it is not a big deal to drink. In the United States we have put drinking alcohol up on a pedestal that you aren't allowed to even touch until you are twenty-one. Alcohol becomes this great untouchable thing that teenagers have to get a hold of. The United States is basically telling young adults don't touch this, and what are they going to do? They are not only going to touch it, they are going to run wild with it. By making alcohol an untouchable substance for anyone under the age of twenty-one we are not teaching those people how to be responsible with alcohol. At a college party some people take it upon themselves to drink as much as they can. It doesn't matter what happens later. They just want to drink alcohol because we aren't allowed.

I believe that if we lower the drinking age to eighteen the United States can educate young adults on alcohol instead of just telling them that it is bad, and they aren't allowed to have it. Young adults will have the opportunity to learn self control and limitations with alcohol if it starts with supervision. Otherwise, the alcohol poisoning, alcohol overdose, and illegally buying alcohol is just going to continue, if not increase. Kids become adults when they hit the age of eighteen. We trust them with so many things, why can't we trust them with this? It is time for a change.

Justin Garrett-Becker, 3/31/2009:

Most students will argue that the drinking age should be lowered because, "If we can go fight for a war we don't believe in at the age of 18, then we should be allowed to drink." Now I'm all for lowering the drinking age to 18 but if we as responsible students really want this to happen we have to come up with much more logical reason to persuade our peers.

The truth is, we all know it's not just the drinking that's the problem, it's binge drinking. Most underage students get together in basements across the country and drink as much as possible and as fast as possible just to get drunk. It's illegal, so what better rush then to get completely wasted with a group of friends. The same with marijuana, things that are legal just aren't as much

fun as those that are. Let's face it, there's always going to be that level of irresponsibility that comes with drinking. It's not necessarily going to fix the problem by making the age requirement 21, because we all enter into the same level of irresponsible territory when we choose to drink.

The only thing we can do is accept the fact that students are going to continue partying and drinking. The only way we can discourage irresponsible behavior like binge drinking is making it more readily available to college students so that it loses its appeal and we all go back to drinking at bars, not in basements.

Cassandra Hyden, 3/30/2009:

When looking at lowering the legal drinking age I am not for it and the reasons are as follows. Being eighteen you have barely been driving for two years and are just now getting comfortable with this area in your life and now you can drink in my opinion this would cause more car accidents and deaths. I know that we are seen as an adult and are supposed to be responsible at this age but let's face it many of us are not and we think that nothing bad will ever happen to us when that is not true but at this age we think it is. I know that you can move away from home, join the army and go to war and get married if we wish and not be able to drink. However I think that waiting till a person is 21 is not too much to ask and they have experienced the world more and can make better decisions. I know that underage drinking does happen but you also have kids who do wait until they are 21 and are glad that they did. Just because other countries have a lower drinking limit does not mean that the US should I think that the way it is now is fine and should remain as is.

Benjamin Taylor, 3/30/2009:

The argument concerning drinking age is one that will likely continue no matter what course of action is taken. Having said that I believe it is important to adhere to what is fair. First and foremost before I propose my point I should mention I do not support any idea of a person getting drunk. I have seen the result firsthand in the most negative of extremes and disagree with it.

Having said that I believe in fairness and believe if one has certain rights at the age of 18 or 21 that those said rights should be given on the same age, to me it doesn't matter which age that is. We should not differentiate between these two ages because there is entirely no point, people under 21 who want a taste of the brew will find a drink one way or another, it might as well be a way that can be taxed.

I believe the reason for this potentially everlasting debate on this is due to cultural differences between the United States and that of other countries. There seems to be a strange phenomenon where Americans above all other cultures seem to value the euphoric (drunk) gratification that alcoholic beverages give rather than the taste which is quite strange in itself. As one of the respondents stated earlier perhaps even though it is only fair for all "adults" to have the same drinking rights as others it doesn't change the fact that perhaps we as a culture are not mature enough to handle.

Kristin Thomas, 3/29/2009:

I think that lowering the legal drinking age would be a mistake. The level of maturity of an 18 year old cannot handle the consequences that come along with drinking. I feel like when I was 18 I was so irresponsible and careless. A lot of people argue that if you are old enough to fight in a war then you should be able to drink but I personally feel like this is a different level of maturity

and that the age to enlist in the military could probably stand to be raised as well. When the United States lowered the age of legal drinking in the 70's fatalities jumped from 10 to 40 percent and when the age was brought back up fatalities fell, along with traffic fatalities declining by 13 percent. Some argue that by making it a law that you can't drink until you are 21 causes more binge drinking on college campuses. I feel like that it would only be worse if it were legal. From the viewpoint of a college student who has already been through this I feel like lowering the age of legal drinking would be more harmful then helpful.

Steven Edwards, 3/29/2009:

After looking up information and talking to people I know in the medical field I have what I would consider two opinions about the idea of lowering the drinking age to eighteen years of age. I personally do think that it should be lowered. One of my biggest arguments for this is the fact that you are considered an adult at eighteen. Therefore, you should be able to make all of the decisions of an adult. I also do not agree with the idea that Americans can sign up for the military at eighteen. This is wrong to me because I think if you are possibly signing yourself up to die I think you should be able to have a beer with your closest friends before you go, or when you return home. Just because you are able to drink does not mean you are going to behave irresponsibly while doing so. Also it has been proven that when most "kids" drink underage they Binge drink. This can cause many deaths due to drinking. So I feel as if we lower the drinking age then more kids are going to be responsible when they are allowed to do it resulting in less deaths due to binge drinking. I was also looking at information about other countries that have a lower drinking age. Through my searching one of the things I stumbled upon was the fact that the countries that have a lower drinking age have less underage consumption and also less deaths due to underage consumption. This is because they have more responsibility due to it.

Also when I was looking I found that most people argue today that the drinking age should not be lowered because it stunts growth and they claim the liver is not fully developed at the age of eighteen. I called my grandma who has been an RN for 45 years. I asked her if she could talk to a doctor where she works about these things I have discovered. He told me that alcohol does not stunt the growth of the human body. Also he told me that your liver is already fully developed when you are born. He told me that one reason drinking is at the age it is now is due to the fact that the brain is not fully developed at eighteen. According to him there is a portion of the brain that is related to addiction and it is not fully developed and you cannot distinguish from an addiction and a non-addiction at this age. If this is the truth then how can we say you are an adult at eighteen? If this is all true then I do not think the age of adulthood should be eighteen and it should be raised to 21 because that is when they say it is able to make the distinction. Therefore the drinking should be 21 also. But if we are saying you are capable of making all your own decisions at 18 then this should be one you are allowed to make. But if we should keep the drinking age 21 saying you cannot make the distinction between addiction and non-addiction then that should be the same for tobacco products, and adulthood. Therefore the age of adulthood should be raised to 21 or the age of true adulthood should be considered everything including drinking.

Shane Sissle, 3/29/2009:

The debate of whether or not the drinking age should be raised is something that has been in discussion for several years and I believe that a final decision should be made. I believe that the drinking age should in fact be lowered to the age of 18 for many different reasons. First, by

lowering the drinking age we are giving less of a reason for teenagers to engage in a mischievous behavior when consuming alcohol and this therefore will create less of a pressure for individuals to drink alcohol at a young age because the availability will become less of a problem. Second, lowering the drinking age for the purchase of alcohol gives better agreement with other laws that we currently have in place in the United States. For example, citizens are allowed to vote and enlist in the army or be drafted during war, and purchase cigarettes at the age of 18. It simply doesn't make sense to give these types of adult responsibilities to individuals who are 18 and then not allow the purchase of alcohol either. Third, with recent inclusion of an alcohol tax, lowering the drinking age will give more incentive for more individuals to purchase alcohol and therefore will help the alcohol tax put in place to assist the economy in its current weakened state.

These are just a few of the reasons why I feel the drinking age should be lowered to the age of 18. Though many may disagree with these ideas I feel they give the best support for the allowance of individuals, age 18, to be allowed to purchase alcohol.

Nicholas Baer, 3/27/2009:

I have read all of the other posts and there isn't much that can be said without just saying it again. But I think that it is completely ridiculous to hold the drinking age at 21. Like said in other people's posts, being 18 you are legally an adult, you can own a house, have a line of credit, get married, fight for your country, make life saving decisions as an EMS worker, become a firefighter and walk in 500 degree plus environments but our government doesn't think that we can be trusted with a drink. Besides the fact that it is absurd not to allow adults to purchase alcohol, if a person wants alcohol pretty much regardless of age they can get it very easily. I can speak for myself and a vast majority of the people I know most have been drunk even before the age of 18 and that is not going to stop, even if the drinking age is lowered to 18, but what's the harm really if people are doing so responsibly. The general public needs to be gradually taught to drink responsibly like maybe enforcing a zero tolerance BAC level for those from those drivers 18-20. I am also a firm believer of the "forbidden fruit" idea if you are denied something and you are trying not to get caught doing something it makes it that much more desirable to do. But my main point that I want to make clear is that if the government thinks that we are responsible to make decisions and die for our country the drinking age should be reduced or the legal adult age should be raised to be 21.

Brittany Greenwell, 3/26/2009:

I think the drinking age should be kept the same as it already is. If the drinking age were to be lowered to age 18, I believe there would be more teen drunk driving cases and more alcohol related deaths. I do not think that by lowering the age that teens would simply lose the joy they get when they are drinking alcohol. Teenagers simply are not mature enough to be drinking alcohol and they most certainly can not be trusted to make the right decisions under the influence of alcohol. Judgment is impaired by alcohol so therefore no body can make a good, informed decision while under the influence of alcohol. One thing that really bothers me is that I walk into the ECU bookstore and see shot glasses and liquor glasses right up in the front of the store so that everyone can see them. What kind of message does this send out? I found this very disturbing when I came to visit ECU for the first time and so did my parents. Since drinking glasses are sold on campus one would think this only makes it acceptable for students to drink on campus. There are many people who say if we are allowed to vote, serve our country, and buy cigarettes at the age of 18 then the drinking age should be lowered to 18. I do believe the ages for

everything should all be the same but I do not think the drinking age should be lowered. The other ages simply need to be raised.

aureol, 3/25/2009:

As a British citizen now living in Kentucky, I have been invited by a professor at ECU to weigh in on the drinking age debate - 21, or lower it to 18 years old. I graduated in 1968 in England and had spent quite a few nights at the pub, mainly at the weekends. I did not drive back to campus after those nights: sometimes the beer was sold at the dance venue on campus, and other times we would walk, or take a handy bus to a location. Here in the US there are rarely, rarely buses available, and no one seems to walk anywhere these days.

The cultural differences surrounding drinking in the United Kingdom and in the United States make it unwise to allow those in the US to drink under the age of 21. We Brits never had prohibition to colour our thinking about drinking. It has not served as the stimulus for uninhibited behaviours as it has Stateside. Many Brit families have beer and wine in the fridge and cupboard and share a drink with a friend in the evening. The church families are drinking even, and when the Vicar comes to call, one offers him a sherry. See how different it is?

In England there are very, very strong cultural mandates that limit drunken driving, and there are stiff fines and harsh constraints placed on those caught under the influence! The concept of "designated driver" is universal in England, and those who are drinking take turns with that chore, whether at a home, a bar or a pub. The culture does not allow for drunks to drive. (Of course some do!, but you get the picture.)

Alcoholism, the disease, is identified only after having consumed alcohol, and then the delight and subsequent cravings will appear, redflagging the drinker, who will certainly continue drinking. Only by severe and harsh measures can an alcoholic cease from drinking, and then it is a forever, zero drinks thing. I know whereof I speak. Alcoholics Anonymous is the famous and most successful choice for recovery from this powerful, cunning, and baffling disease.

As many have said, a young person will find a drink if they want a drink. Now if an 18 year old is able, legally, to buy alcohol then the introduction to drinking and alcoholism is found sooner in that person's life. Sadly. In American homes there is not the culture of 'a sherry before dinner,' (see the Brit Comedies for some clues on this,) and so in my mind, lowering the drinking age to 18 would be folly. Do not do it people. America is hardly ready.

Cassady Milne, 3/25/2009:

I think that the drinking ages should be lowered to 18 again. Many High school students in many other modern countries around the world have the drinking age set to 17 or 16 or no age limit at all and these countries still do better on standardized tests in the areas of mathematics and science than students do in the United States. An argument against lowering the drinking age to 18 and keeping it at the current age of 21 is that the brain is still developing until the age of 21, but alcohol expert Dr. David Hanson from the state University of New York at Potsdam says that these opinions are based on bad science because many of these studies are based on tests of people already dependent on alcohol or drugs, and studies on lab mice. One of the dangers caused by the current restrictions on drinking is that it creates a culture of secrecy about drinking and because of this young drinkers will be less likely to report problems that arise because of binge drinking. The current laws do not seem to limit the ability for young adults to obtain alcohol. 18.8 percent of high school kids are binge drinkers, 6 percent are heavy drinkers, and the percentage of highschool kids who drank in the last month went up 43.3 percent. If adults under

the age of 21 are able to pay taxes, serve in the military, drive a car, and vote I think that they should be considered adult enough to be able to drink.

Selma Nukic, 3/23/2009:

It has been said that the drinking age at twenty-one is not working, and I think that lowering the drinking age is going to be worse then it is now. Because students would then abuse achohol use even more and more problems on university campus's would occur. I don't think that it would be a positive thing on students at age 18 to be drinking, because they are least likely to drink responsibly at that age. It is a different story when your 21, I think your more matured and know your limits to drinking and would drink more carefully. When the age drinking was set to 21, I think was the right thing to do. If twenty-one years of age is not working, how would 18 work when students who were teens just turned 18 and give them the right to drink. That I think is overdoing it, because I think the college rate would drop even more. Most students are 18 or 19 when they enter college, that is enough and if the state allowed them to drink it would make them less aware and abuse it and drink more then usual. Yes the drinking age is 21, students below the drinking age drink as well but I think that it is better then lowering it and then there would be more drinking and driving then there is now. No matter what the drinking is, there is still going to be problems with it, it cant be solved just by lowering that drinking age. I myself have taken a couple of drinks and am under 21, but I still don't think the drinking should be lowered due to more risks.

Carolyn Kline, 3/22/2009:

I do not favor lowing the drinking age to 18 but certainly think that all states should have the same age legality when it comes to drinking. I graduated from college in 1964 and lived in a state where 21 was the legal age but went to college in a state that was 18. It never did make sense to me why I could go out with friends at college but when I came home I couldn't take them out. As a retired person now that I look back on the things I did in college I am horrified at some of my experiences. At that time we had a draft for the military and our young people were forced to serve and not join the services by choice. At that time I thought they should be able to drink as I thought I should. Now that I have matured over the years I am horrified to think that those defending the country are spending their free time drinking and impairing their brain functions because I do know that drinking causes you to do and say things that you would not have done without alcohol in your system.

Tanya Durbin, 3/17/2009:

I think that the drinking age should remain 21 and not be lowered to 18 years of age. I know everyone says no matter how old they are they are still going to find a way to drink if they want too. I am a sophomore in college and my freshman year was hectic. I couldn't even begin to understand how people as young as 18 could balance a new environment such as college along with going out to the bars in the middle of the night. If you ask 18 year old students whether they would study or go to the bar if they had a choice no doubt most of them would go to the bar. Why give them that choice? When I was 18 I was trying to manage the real world and trying to start on my road to my career. I can't see how if I was allowed to drink that I would be able to make any right choices for my life. I found a Senior Political Science Major from Montgomery, Texas named Nick Joyner on the website dailyskiff.com. He also stood for not changing the drinking age to 18 and the best reason that stuck out in my mind was that, "Those who want to

drink will find a way, but maybe by keeping the drinking age at 21 we can discourage at least a few teenagers from drinking before they are ready.” I agree with him lets try and keep the children that make the smarter decisions to wait to drink from even being tempted into it by changing the drinking age.

Jenna, 3/16/2009:

I think it should be up to the states to determine what their respective MLDA should be. The federal highways act that threatens to take away funding from states if they drop their MLDA below 21 is in my opinion unconstitutional. States have the right to determine what laws concerning drinking are in their states.

Curtis, 3/16/2009:

I think the drinking age should under no circumstances be lowered to 18. The problem with underage drinking does not stem from the fact that the drinking age is set too high but is due to a lack of enforcement. Some may argue that lowering the drinking age would lessen the burden of enforcement on police officers. However, under this reasoning wouldn't we just be making it legal for those currently underage to engage in the risky behavior we are currently trying to prevent with the current MLDA?

Frank Donnelly, 3/16/2009:

I am a non-traditional student who, once upon a time, was a traditional student. I had absolutely no trouble getting liquor when I wanted it. If we, as a democracy, allow 18 year old citizens suffrage, the ability to legally enter into a binding contract, and, yes, serve our county, then surely we can trust them to have a beer with their hot wings. If they are, in fact, too immature to buy and consume alcohol responsibly then they should not be trusted to choose our leaders, they should not be extended credit, and they should not be trusted to defend our country.

As for the notion that reducing the legal drinking age to 18 would create the "slippery slope" situation allowing high school and middle school aged children to all of the sudden have access alcohol, may I remind you that more than three of every four students have had alcohol by the end of high school with almost half by the eighth grade. More than half of twelfth graders and a fifth of the eighth graders have been drunk at least once. (www.healthatoz.com. Ed. . June 2007. . March 2009 <

<http://www.healthatoz.com/healthatoz/Atoz/common/standard/transform.jsp?requestURI=/healthatoz/Atoz/dc/cen/ment/alco/tsalcohol.jsp />>)

Deborah Martin, 3/16/2009:

Without doing too much research, I believe the legal ages for a variety of things need to be uniform. I find it absurd that you can fight for your country and participate in the electoral process before you can legally partake of alcohol. Not to mention marry, procreate and contribute to the economy through the workforce. Make them all 16, 18 or 21, but make them all the same.

Laura Melius, 3/16/2009:

Speaking as a parent of two recent college grads and as a resident of a college town, I feel that it is time to at least explore the benefits and/or detriments of lower the drinking age to 18. I just read this article, By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY, which stated that “Nearly half of

college freshmen who drink alcohol spend more time drinking each week than they do studying, suggests a survey involving more than 30,000 first-year students on 76 campuses who took an online alcohol education course last fall." The article also talked about how turning 21 frequently merits a binge drinking celebration. These facts are not surprising but they are very alarming. Colleges nationwide have been working hard to curtail the glamour of drinking and to discourage binge drinking, but seem to be having little success. Perhaps by lowering the drinking age, we could take away some of the forbidden fruit mystique. It may also allow parents and colleges to have more of an impact on our students as they transition into the responsibilities of adulthood. Having hosted international exchange students who grew up being able to drink at any age, it was easy to observe that they displayed a much healthier attitude toward and behavior with drinking than our US students. At this point, I feel it is at least worth a try to explore ways to develop healthier attitudes in our students than what we are doing now – which based on this recent study, is not working.

Dana Patton, 3/11/2009:

Europe is not a good comparison. People in Europe are far more likely to walk to a pub and stumble home instead of getting into a car. Public transportation is also used to a greater extent than in the US. True though, other countries have lower legal drinking ages and don't seem to have the same issues we have. Having lived in several of these countries in Central and South America, I can say it has very little to do with the government and much more to do with the parents. Teenagers are "taught" how to drink responsibly by their parents. Most teens in the US are simply told not to drink and not to have sex. We all know how that's working out for us. One argument is that 20-somethings currently purchase alcohol for 18, 19, year-olds, etc. Would lowering the drinking age to 18 result in 18 year olds purchasing for 15, 16 year olds?

Nick Goodman, 3/9/2009:

Water to Wine Legislation?

I assume that two of the main concerns about lowering the drinking age revolve around the maturity of American teens with alcohol, and the potential rise in drunk driving among teens in the US. European teens do have more maturity when it comes to alcohol consumption, but I believe that this is partially due to being raised in a culture that doesn't treat alcohol as taboo. Furthermore I believe that their ability to purchase it at a younger age has a psychological effect on the forbidden fruit syndrome. (i.e. I know that drinking lost some of its appeal when I turned 21) However the trade-off is that European kids have to wait two more years and go through a longer and more rigorous training process before obtaining a drivers license than kids in the US. If the assembly decides to lower the drinking age, then it needs to impose some sort of limits on teens, connected with their driving to make it socially and politically achievable.

I propose a two year probationary period wherein teens can buy any beverages from zero alcohol (water) up to content that would include most wine. This is much like the system in Germany where the limit is 20% between the ages of 16 and 18. However with driving privileges being dispersed at a younger age in the US, the system should be modified. If a young adult is caught breaking the law while under the influence during the 18-20 probationary period, their license would automatically be revoked among the other punishments doled out for arson, vandalism, reckless driving, etc; what ever was done that might otherwise might not have happened with unaffected judgment. This would leave them without mobility and without Identity to purchase alcohol. An alternative State ID can be issued in case of a revoked license. If

they turn 21 without incident, then purchase of any alcoholic beverage would become legal.

If revoking a license exceeds the assembly's mandate, then some sort of step by step approach by which teens could purchase incrementally stronger beverages as they age could also be a politically viable way to lower the drinking age, rather than going from one to a hundred at age 18.

Jerry Thomas (law school student and former ECU faculty member), 2/21/2009:

There are policy reasons why we should not lower the drinking age. Young people are reckless, immature, and irresponsible, and we should retain current limitations on access to alcoholic beverages to keep young people from killing innocent others on the streets while driving drunk (as statistics suggest younger people are more prone to do). Legal rights (such as the right to drink) are never absolute. They must be balanced with the rights of others. So while there may be compelling arguments to lower the drinking age, these arguments must be balanced with other policy concerns, such as the rights of others that will invariably be infringed upon by historically reckless behavior of irresponsible young drinkers. Some might say, "If you are old enough to die for your country in war, then you should be old enough to have a beer before you die." Perhaps. However, two wrongs don't make a right. We should not be sending 18-year-olds to fight the wars of 50-year-olds. People who are 18 years old should not be killing other people purposefully at the hands of government, or accidentally while drunk in a car.

Amanda Helton, 2/19/2009:

Europe is proof positive that a lower drinking age will help people become more responsible drinkers. Their culture does not place such of an emphasis on when you can and cannot drink. They do not have nearly the same amount of incidents of drunk driving and alcohol poisoning that America does. I think the earlier the drinking age, the more likely people will be able to learn how to drink responsibly.

Sallie Gurganus, 2/18/2009:

I believe that there are some serious issues that have come to past due to alcohol intake but I don't think that these problems are subjected primarily to minors. I think because drinking has been made into such a big deal in this country, teenagers want to participate in the action even more. I realize that some say people under the age of 21 are not mature enough to drink (but they will anyways, if they truly want to), and if that is the case they are probably not mature enough to join the Army or even own a credit card. I, myself just turned 21 and after the first night of celebration, there was really nothing different to my lifestyle. I believe the drinking age should be changed to 18, however, I do still think that underage drinking will occur but maybe the dangerous binge drinking will not be as extreme and prominent.

Jimmy, 2/18/2009:

I believe that the legal drinking age should be lowered from 21 to 18. By making it illegal for 18-20 year olds to purchase and consume alcohol, we are in no way preventing them from drinking. Studies have shown no significant impact on the drinking habits of youths related to increased legal drinking ages. In much the same way that speakeasies were created out of prohibition laws, the 21 year old legal drinking age forces underage drinkers to develop their own hideaways (dorm rooms, automobiles etc.) to consume alcohol. This develops a sense of rebellion and urgency which can cause underage drinkers to consume in a more abusive manner.

By allowing 18-20 year olds the opportunity to consume alcohol in public establishments, they have better opportunities to develop responsible drinking habits in a much more controlled environment.

Kendra Stewart, 2/16/2009:

I think it is time to lower the drinking age to 18. We entrust 18 year olds with all the other rights and responsibilities of adulthood, so why not drinking alcohol? The federal government allows individuals who are 18 to live on their own, buy a home, own a credit card, go to war, take out a loan, get married, have children, and vote, but not have a glass of wine. Although I do believe this is a state policy issue, what about the guarantee by the federal government to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? Shouldn't drinking a beer fall under one of those categories?