

LEGAL AGE 21

Implemented in 1984, the National Minimum Drinking Age Act raised the drinking age from 18 to 21. While the specific age ultimately rests with the states, they forfeit 10% of their high-way funding if they choose to lower the age.

HAS LED TO.....

Marginalized Parents

Legal Age 21 ties the hands of parents and places them in an untenable position. They must either ignore the reality of alcohol consumption among young people and forbid their children from drinking or break the law by serving alcohol to their under-21 children. Neither option is acceptable to a responsible parent, or in a society governed by rule of law. Parents need to be re-enfranchised, again involved in the process of teaching their children how to make informed, healthy decisions about alcohol and its use.

The [CR] Mission

Promoting informed public debate and a fresh approach to the problem of reckless and excessive drinking, especially by young people.

[CR] Proposal

CONGRESSIONAL WAIVER

Every state should have the ability to determine its own drinking age, without facing the penalty of a 10% reduction in its federal highway appropriation. States that present a well-conceived plan for educating and licensing young adults ought to be granted such a waiver.

EDUCATION

Alcohol education in America is virtually non-existent, and only mandatory after arrest or court-ordered alcohol treatment. We envision a program similar to Drivers' Education in that it will be taught by a certified alcohol educator, trained specifically to cover the legal, ethical, health and safety issues of the curriculum, which will involve both instruction and community involvement.

LICENSING

Upon completion of the alcohol education course, students will receive a certificate in the form of a license, conferring benefits and responsibilities. Any applicant for the license found to be in violation of a state's alcohol laws prior to the age of 18 should be ineligible for licensing for a state-mandated period of time.

90% of the alcohol consumed by 18-20 year-olds is consumed when the individual is engaged in a episode of heavy drinking. These drinking episodes occur where Legal Age 21 has forced them -- behind closed doors, in risky and unregulated environments-- and directly place not only the drinker, but also the innocent citizen, at risk. More than 1,000 young lives a year are lost to alcohol off the roads.



"Binge" Surge

Abridged Age of Majority



The drinking age is the lone exception to the legal age of adulthood in the US. 18 year-olds can vote and enlist and fight in Iraq, among other rights and responsibilities. In nearly all cultures, alcohol consumption is coincident with the legal age of adulthood. Legal Age 21 is out of step with the generally accepted societal norm of alcohol as accompaniment to maturity and adulthood.

Disrespect for Law

The consumption of alcohol by Americans under the legal drinking age is common and widespread, yet rarely recognized as a legal breach. Legal Age 21 fosters rampant violation of and disrespect for law—one study estimates that only two in every 1,000 instances of underage drinking results in arrest or citation. In this sense, the climate surrounding the 21 year-old drinking age is analogous to that of Prohibition in the 1920s.

"The time has come to address the reality of alcohol in America"