



Safety and responsibility.

On the subject of alcohol use, these words appear to be virtually universal. But there is something missing.

Common Sense.

Alcohol is a reality in the lives of young Americans. It cannot be denied, ignored, or legislated away. Please join us in supporting a sensible, practical approach to this pressing and complex social issue.

Learn more.

If you are looking for more information on how you can help to change the drinking culture of young Americans, or would like to support this initiative financially, please contact us at:

Choose Responsibility

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[CR] Choose Responsibility

[an initiative defined by
balance, maturity,
and common sense]

Just when do you become an adult?

The dictionary defines adulthood as “the moment when children legally assume control over their persons, their actions, and their decisions.”

Legal Age 21 says otherwise.

In all instances but one—the purchase, possession, and consumption of alcohol—18 year-olds are considered adults in the United States.

By law, at age 18 you are mature enough to...

- enlist or be drafted, risking your life for our nation
- marry, adopt children, and be a legal guardian
- open a bank account, go into debt, own property, sue or be sued
- vote, and seek or hold public office
- purchase firearms
- smoke, buy lottery tickets, and gamble
- enter into a legally binding contract

But the law says you are not capable of making responsible decisions about alcohol.

In 1984, Congress passed the National Minimum Drinking Age Act, which denies federal highway funds to states that set a drinking age lower than 21.

This law creates an indefensible anomaly—and constitutes an inexplicable affront—to young adults in the United States.

This law places the United States alongside Indonesia, Mongolia, and Palau as the only countries with a 21 year-old drinking age.



Choose Responsibility

is a new, non-profit organization. Our mission is to promote general public awareness of the dangers of excessive and reckless alcohol consumption by young adults through a program of research, publication, education, and related activities that engage young people, their parents, and public officials in serious deliberation on the role of alcohol in American culture.

Is Legal Age 21 working?

Prohibition doesn't work. Prohibition has never worked. Prohibition simply forces drinking underground. As a result, once again the United States faces a serious crisis, which poses health, civic, and ethical challenges.

- Statistics indicate that fewer young adults are drinking. But those who choose to drink are also drinking more heavily, harmfully, and irresponsibly than ever before.
- Between 1993 and 2001, 18 to 20 year-olds showed a 56% increase in heavy-drinking episodes, the largest increase among American adults.
- 96% of the alcohol consumed by 15 to 20 year-olds is consumed when the drinker is actively engaged in a period of heavy drinking.
- Legal Age 21 breeds disrespect for law in general and leads to ethical compromises—few of the young adults who choose to drink underage give more than a nod of acknowledgment to the fact that they are breaking the law each time they pop open a beer can or use a false ID to buy a drink.

Even a parent can be “illegal”

Where do young people get exposed to the most pivotal influence in their lives? **At home.**

And yet in many states, when it comes to the use of alcohol, parents are in violation of the law if they serve alcohol to their own sons and daughters in the privacy of their own homes. Legal Age 21 effectively—and destructively—marginalizes and compromises the parental role in this most critical aspect of a young person's development.

In the current environment, drinking for young people under 21 takes place behind closed doors and, if they are college students, off-campus. Drinking that is not out in the open—and drinking that requires one to find a dark corner or travel to a remote location—puts not only the drinker, but also the innocent citizen, at greater risk. This is a direct by-product of the Legal Age 21 law.

The dangers of irresponsible drinking run deep. But consider this: parents who are expected to take the direct responsibility for helping the teens in their household learn to operate an automobile safely are shackled by law from much more than a conversation concerning the use of alcohol.

The statistics speak volumes

Legal Age 21 has had only limited effect on drunk driving:

- Compared to their peers in 22 other countries, where the drinking age is lower, American students have the highest rate of drinking and driving.

- The rate of traffic fatalities—in all age groups—began to decline in 1969, more than a decade before Legal Age 21 was adopted.
- More lives have been saved in the last two years alone by safety belts and air bags than have been saved in the 22 years since the adoption of Legal Age 21.
- Four factors have combined powerfully (and dramatically more than Legal Age 21) to the decline of driving fatalities associated with alcohol: safer cars, higher awareness by drivers of all ages, greater utilization of a “designated driver,” and more vigorous law enforcement.

Taking a fresh approach: An outline of promise and practicality

Simply returning the legal age for alcohol consumption to 18 would accomplish little. Instead, [CR] proposes a multi-faceted approach that combines education, certification, and provisional licensing for 18–20 year-old high school graduates who choose to consume alcohol.

Like drivers' education, this approach would involve parents, require completion of an education program, and offer the incentive of a license upon completion of the course. We believe that by establishing such a system of incentive and reward, we can treat 18, 19, and 20 year-olds as the adults the law says they are, attack the pervasive culture of excessive drinking, and empower young Americans to choose responsibility.