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Cornerstone

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Lowering the Drinking Age to Eighteen

INTRODUCTION

- I. **Attention Getter:** A person who has attained the age of maturity specified by law is considered an adult.
- II. **Build Rapport:** In the United States, that age of adulthood is eighteen and with every American's eighteenth birthday comes all the rights, provisions, and responsibilities of becoming an adult. Everything is included in becoming an adult except for alcohol consumption.
- III. **Establish Credibility:** One may ask, why can I fight and die for my country but I can't drink a beer legally? This is questioned by many Americans throughout the country. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, more than 70 percent of teens drink by the time they reach 18, and 80 percent of underage college students drink.
- IV. **Thesis:** Although the drinking age is twenty-one, I believe that the drinking age should be lowered to eighteen because when one turns eighteen they are considered an "adult" in the nation's eyes.
- V. **Preview:** Within this speech, I will be discussing why the drinking age should be lowered to eighteen.

Transition: When one turns eighteen they have the right to vote, join the military, sign contracts, get tattoos, piercings, get married, and serve on juries.

BODY

I. In the article, *The Debate on Lowering the Drinking Age*, Mark Beckner, police chief of Boulder, Colorado stated, "Why don't we trust these young adults to make the same kind of responsible decisions about alcohol that we believe them capable of making in the voting booth, in the jury box, and on the battlefield?"

A. This is a very good question Beckner brought up. The United States is one of six countries that has a drinking age of twenty-one. If eighteen year olds are responsible enough to make decisions about who is going to lead our country, then they should be allowed to make other decisions about consuming alcohol. Part of Beckner's jurisdiction is at the University of Colorado. Recently, The University of Colorado was named one of the top partying schools in the nation. Beckner encountered many issues enforcing the drinking laws.

1. Many minors felt that if their passed out friend needed medical help that everyone else would get in trouble with the law if they called for help. Their passed out friend would then suffer because of the fear of getting ticketed for underage drinking. This problem is encountered by many minors throughout the nation.

B. Beckner also stated, “The overall advantage is we're not trying to enforce a law that's unenforceable. The abuse of alcohol and the over-consumption of alcohol and DUI driving. Those are the areas we've gotta focus our efforts. Not on chasing kids around trying to give 'em a ticket for having a cup of beer in their hand.”

1. When a police chief is stating this, we take into consideration that it is much more important enforcing over consumption of alcohol versus ticketing an innocent responsible underage drinker.

Transition: Minors should receive full privileges of alcohol consumption but should also be taught about alcohol so they can make responsible decisions rather than being behind the scenes about drinking underage.

II. In the article, *Let Them Drink at the Age of 18, With a Learners Permit*, John M. McCardell Jr, stated “We should prepare young adults to make responsible decisions about alcohol in the same way we prepare them to operate a motor vehicle: by first educating and then licensing and permitting them to exercise the full privileges of adulthood so long as they demonstrate their ability to observe the law,”. John is the vice-chancellor and president of the University of the South. He believes that it is not efficient trying to enforce the current drinking laws.

A. Rather than the police force distributing millions of tickets to underage drinkers, the time and efficiency would be better spent towards teaching the minors the correct amount of alcohol to intake versus binge drinking. These classes would teach the minors about alcohol so they understand the full provisions of what happens when consumed and if consumed to much how to take action.

1. If there were better education about drinking alcohol, our overconsumption of alcohol would highly decline.

B. When the drinking age was changed to twenty-one, the alcohol for the underage was considered a taboo.

1. Lowering the drinking age would take away the thrill of breaking the law for the minors. This would make alcohol consumption more of a normalized thing for the underage. When lowering the drinking age our problem of binge drinking would decrease immensely. Not only that, the minors could drink in a controlled environment versus drinking in disguise where problems are encountered and binge drinking happens.

Transition: Not only has binge drinking been a problem encountered, drinking and driving has also been another problem faced by the United States.

III. One of the main reasons why the government raised the drinking age to twenty-one is because they felt that it would decrease deaths in traffic accidents. Many people believe that due to the increase in the legal drinking age has actually decreased motorized accidents throughout our country.

A. According to Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, there were 43,945 motor vehicle-related deaths in 1982, a number that decreased to 43,510 in 2005 and 32,367 in 2011”.

1. The fatalities due to vehicle-related deaths have decreased within these years but technology has become much more innovative which has led to a decrease in accidents on the roads. Not only in the United States have accidents decreased, all the other countries with the drinking ages lowered to eighteen or even sixteen has seen a decrease in motorized vehicle accidents also.

B. “The decrease in drinking and driving problems are the result of many factors and not just the rise in purchase age or the decreased per capita consumption. These include: education concerning drunk driving, designated driver programs, increased seat belt and air bag usage, safer automobiles, lower speed limits, free taxi services from drinking establishments, etc,” stated in the article, *Why the Drinking Age Should be Lowered*.

1. Drinking and driving is a serious problem because citizens lives are at risk. The legal blood alcohol content level to drive a car for the United States must be below 0.08. If the concern is driving while intoxicated they should lower the blood alcohol content level. In this chart, it shows what affects you at each level of blood alcohol content. With the United States level being 0.08, drivers could have trouble controlling speed and difficulty processing information and reasoning. Instead of the drinking age being at twenty-one, the government should consider lowering the limit of blood alcohol content level while driving a motorized vehicle.

Transition: Drinking and driving is a huge concern throughout but eighteen year olds are considered an adult should be able to make those adult decisions.

CONCLUSION

I. **Brakelight/Logical Closure:** Every eighteen year old should have the rights to be able to choose whether or not they want to consume alcohol legally.

II. **Psychological Closure:** If an eighteen year old is considered an “adult”, then they should receive the full privileges of an adult. Although the drinking age is twenty-one, I believe that the drinking age should be lowered to eighteen because an eighteen year old is considered an “adult” in the nation’s eyes.

III. **Clincher:** Eighteen is the age of adulthood, let alcohol consumption be apart of the adult decisions that the government knows eighteen year olds are capable of.

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