

Need to raise the driving age

Business



In the United States, the legal driving age in most states is 16 years.

Teenagers are always eager to anxious to reach this age so that they can join those on the road. Adults, on the other hand are, more often than not, infuriated by the idea of having 16 year old teenagers driving. I advocate for a raise in legal driving age from the current 16 years to at least 18 years.

Well thought arguments will be presented to show why this age needs to be raised. Reliable research findings show that 16 year old teenagers underestimate hazardous situations and are less likely to make rational decisions in dangerous situations than older drivers.

Alexander (4) notes that the brain of 16 year old teenagers is not fully developed and for that reason it may not be in a position to make quick and rational decisions if need be. The author further notes that the brain of 18 or 19 year old is also not fully developed. However, he adds that the brain of 18 and 19 year old teenagers is at an advanced stage of development compared to that of a 16 year old. In most cases, 16 year old drivers are high school students who are still under their parents care. This means that they have not yet become fully responsible citizens who can be entrusted with their own lives leave alone lives of other people.

As is always the case, high school going drivers rarely drive in their cars, instead, they carry on board school mates whom they would like to show off to. In order to do this, these 16 year old drivers over speed and even overtake in places that traffic rules requires them to drive slowly. The pint I'm trying to make is that 16 year old have a high hormonal activity that makes them cruise on the road in a manner that endangers lives many lives. Available statistical data shows that 5, 000 teenagers aged between 16 and

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20 die every year from tragic road accidents. This figure is far higher than the number of teenagers that die from, suicide, homicide and can combined. 400, 000 teenagers are seriously injured every year.

More data shows that 10 percent of deaths in the United States are caused by car accidents. A better proportion of these accidents are caused by teenage drivers aged 16 years and below. Donald (6) notes that road accidents are likely to reduce by more than 13 percent points if the driving age is raised to 18 years. In order to reduce traffic jams on the roads of most states of America, the numbers of vehicles plying these roads need to be reduced. People need to be persuaded to use public means as opposed to using their private vehicles. If 16 year old can be denied licenses till they are 18, then they will have no alternative but to use public means (Stefano 7).

It seems very irrational when everyone is on the road with their private vehicles whereas there is public transport which is much cheaper. This idea will not only help ease traffic jams but will also create more employment for bus and train staff. We are living in a time when global warming has become a matter of concern in our society. Carbon emissions from vehicles have been partly blamed for the increased level of carbon in the atmosphere. One of the possible ways of reducing pollution that comes in the form of vehicle emissions is to reduce gasoline consumption. Reducing the number of vehicle will serve as a means to an end.

If 16 and 17 year old teenagers are denied right to drive, the possibility of having fewer vehicles on emitting carbon will be reduced. Oztalay (8) notes that the bulk of American population is in the 16-20age bracket. Targeting

this group will thus be an easy way through which we can go green.

Firestone (3) suggests that there will be economic gains to be reaped if all American states raise driving age from 18. The amount of gasoline and vehicles imported will definitely go down.

As is already known, an increase in imports hurts a country's balance of payments. Reduced imports will thus see the United States balance of payments improve greatly. What could have been spent in purchasing automobiles can be directed into other profitable investments that can benefit the country in the long run. The other side of the coin There are those who feel that raising legal driving age from the current age to 18 years will have adverse effects on a number of sectors in the economy. Some feel that driving needs skills and so age does not matter.

What an 18 year old teenager can do, a 16 year old can do. These two groups of people, according to Lowell (13), have the same brain capacity so they can make decisions in the same manner. Proponents further argue that what is needed is for teenagers to start training as early as possible so that by the time they are 16; they will have perfected the art of driving. Sooner, they argue, is better than later. If the age is raised to 18, there will be immediate short term consequences. Gasoline, automobile companies and driving schools will lose business.

Shelanbager (14) argues that layoffs are likely to be witnessed in the initial years of new policy implementation. No one would like to see people laid off so the idea of raising legal driving age can be shelved as the nation looks for better ways of dealing with problems associated with teen drivers (Westlake

100). Where do we stand? This paper has presented two sides of the debate. Arguments against the idea of having legal driving age raised do not hold any water. 16 year old teenagers cause more accidents on the American roads than any other class of drivers.

Everyone needs to understand that human life is very precious and should be protected at all costs. If the suggestion of raising legal age from 16 to 18 can be adopted, we will have more lives being saved, more economic gains due to increased savings and investments and more importantly; a clean environment.