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Health & Medicine, Alcoholism



Jordyn Starr Mr. Krinke English III 2/17/13 18 and Drinking Alcohol Eighteen-year-olds should have all the benefits as 21-year-olds. For example, for quite some time, 18-year-olds have been able to get married, fight for our country, vote, buy cigarettes, and rent and/or buy a house. They have virtually all of the same responsibilities a 21-year-old has, besides being able to buy and drink alcohol. According to Dictionary. com, the definition of an adult is: A person who has attained the age of maturity as specified by the law. In the United States, 18-year-olds are not able to drink even though they are considered an adult in the court of law (Archer, 2012). Even neighboring countries such as Canada and Mexico support the fact that a person can drink at the age of 18. In the United States 18 year olds are not able to drink even though they are considered an adult, charged as an adult in the court of law, and can fight in the army; because of this issue the people of the United States should sign a petition and gain signatures, draft the petition, and then gather a sponsoring committee together. The law should be changed to make it legal for people 18 years and older to be able to buy and/or drink alcohol. This needs to be accomplished by changing the law through your state government. The first step in doing this would be to draft a petition stating the drinking age should be 18. Then it is necessary to obtain signatures on the petition. After collecting signatures, the next step is to have a sponsoring committee submit the petition to the state government to have the law changed. If the law were to change for 18-year-olds to be able to drink and buy alcohol, they would have the exact same rights and responsibilities as 21-year-olds. In the United States, when you turn 18, you are given more rights and responsibilities, and legally considered an adult.

When you are 18, you have all of the rights and responsibilities 21 year olds have, except that you are not able to consume or buy an alcoholic beverage. If 18-year-olds were treated the same as 21-year-olds, then everyone would be treated the same in all rights and responsibilities, including buying and drinking alcohol. In the magazine Psychology Today, Dale Archer talks about how 21-year-olds are the same as 18-year-olds, except they cannot drink alcohol. In essence, 18, 19, and 20 year olds can do everything that a 21 year-old can do, except drink alcohol (Archer, 2012). Even though 18-year-olds are not able to drink in the United States, they can drink in neighboring countries such as Canada and Mexico. Our neighboring countries have set the minimum legal drinking age, also known as MLDA, to 18. David Hanson talks about how countries around the world have also set their legal drinking age to 18 in the article Alcohol Problems and Solutions. The majority of countries have set the drinking age at 18 (Hanson). The United States is one of the few countries in the world that has the highest MLDA at 21 years old. If most countries have their MLDA set to 18, the whole world should also set theirs to 18. It appears unfair that an 18-year-old can fight and/or risk their life while fighting for their country, but it is not legal for an 18-year-old to consume or buy an alcoholic beverage. Stefan Kiesbye talks about the legal drinking age changing from 21 to 18 in the article " Should the Legal Drinking Age Be lowered, " and some of the responsibilities of 18 year olds. For example, if 18-year-olds can fight for your country and can be enrolled in the army, they should be able to buy and/or consume alcohol. While many argue that [18-year-olds] are allowed to vote, get married, and serve their country overseas, they should be allowed to legally drink and/or buy alcohol

(Kiesbye, 2013). If one can fight overseas and fight for their country at age 18, and still considered to be an adult, they should be able to consume alcohol. The possibility of dying or getting injured fighting for ones country is a larger responsibility than consuming alcohol. Why is it that you can be considered an adult at 18 and mature enough to fight for your country, but not able to drink and/or buy alcohol? It is believed that 18-year-olds are not mature enough for alcohol. Steven Markoff states in a journal that “ 18 is the age of adulthood in the United States, and adults should have the right to make their own decisions [including] alcohol consumption” (Markoff, 2004). Once a person turns 18, they carry on all of the adult responsibilities. Today, alcohol is widely available and aggressively promoted throughout society. And alcohol use continues to be regarded, by many people, as a normal part of growing up (Reporter, 2006). For example, some of the responsibilities an 18-year-old has are the rights to vote, buy and lease a house, and get married. Drinking is also an adult responsibility that an 18 year-old should be allowed to encounter. If the court system already considers an 18-year-old an adult, 18-year-olds should also be able to have the right to consume alcohol. Even though some say 18-year-olds are immature, that is a mistaken belief. Another misunderstanding is drinking and driving. There is also public misconception that 18 year-olds are the main reason for drinking and driving. What people do not understand is that it is not just 18 year-olds drinking and driving. All ages for drinking and driving are responsible. 18-year-olds are not the only ones responsible. Steven Markoff talks about the higher traffic laws on his webpage “ The Drinking Age. ” Markoff states on the page one of his website how 18-year-olds are not the only reason for the

high traffic accidents. Higher traffic accident and fatality rates occur during the first few years of legal drinking regardless of age (Markoff, 2004). This evidence shows that 18-year-olds are not just the main reason of drinking and driving. Many others are also responsible. All ages of people have been guilty of drinking and driving. The next thing people have confusion about, is binge drinking. Another misunderstanding is binge drinking. Society believes teenagers are known to binge drink at parties with their friends. Steven Markoff talks about drinking in controlled environments such as a restaurant. He states on page 1 of his website, “ Prohibiting this age group from drinking in bars, restaurants, and other licensed locations causes them to drink in unsupervised places such as fraternity houses or house parties where they may be more prone to binge drinking and other unsafe behavior” (Markoff, 2004). Allowing 18-year-olds to drink in controlled environments will reduce the binge drinking and thus decreasing the number of binge drinking incidents. If 18-year-olds are drinking in restaurants and bars, then they should keep track of their alcohol intake. There are also others around watching them. Above all needs to be done is to change the legal drinking age to 18. There are a few steps to take in changing the law. In order to change the law, the first step to take is to get others who agree with the changing the legal drinking age to 18. There are three things one can do to spread the word around about changing the legal drinking age to 18. The first step one needs to take is to talk to people about changing the law and going forward with the steps to change the law. One thing to do to get the word out is protest about it. Dale Archer talks about why he believes the drinking age should be changed. “ It’s time to make the 18-year-old an adult,

with all the rights, privileges and yes, responsibilities that go along with it" (Archer, 2012). By giving 18-year-olds rights and responsibilities, this will also help an 18-year-old grow up a lot faster and see that there are a lot of responsibilities that come in life. The second thing to do is draft the petition. By drafting the petition, it gives congress a chance to hear what some of the problems and issues facing the MLDA are. Alvin Jaeger is the Secretary of State of North Dakota. Jaeger explains how to draft a petition in a pamphlet where the laws are found in the North Dakota Century Code. A referendum or initiative petition must be drafted in the manner prescribed by law (Jaeger, 2011). After drafting a petition, congress will then read the petition and decide their decision then. Then the next step to take is to obtain a sponsoring committee. The reason for gathering a sponsoring committee together is so they can help with ratifying the petition and help the law get changed. By doing this, the committee will help support the law that you want to be changed. Alvin Jaeger states on page 4 of the State of North Dakota law changing pamphlet on how to gather a committee and go through with the law change. A committee is consisted of 25 or more qualified North Dakota voters who agree to as the sponsoring committee for the petition (Jaeger, 2011). By getting at least 25 or more people together, there is a greater chance for having people on the same side of defense, and that will help with changing the law. If congress doesn't approve, then the only thing left to do is keep trying. By trying over and over again, and gathering more and more people each time, congress will then finally see some laws need to be changed. In conclusion, the age of 18, is the start of adulthood, neighboring countries can drink, and you can take your own life

while fighting for your own country. Some people think changing the law is not ideal because of not being fully mature, drinking and driving, and binge drinking. The steps one should take are to change the law by drafting a petition, obtaining signatures on the petition, and get a sponsoring committee together to submit the petition to our state government. When you turn 18, you are given many rights and responsibilities. Like any age, you can make good choices or bad choices. You have the right to vote in elections, buy guns, buy cigarettes or join the military. When you are 18, you are treated like an adult in the court of law. With all these rights, responsibilities and privileges given at 18, you should be able to drink at the age of 18. Works Cited Archer, D. (2012, July 13). The Pros and Cons Of Drinking At 18. *Psychology Today* , pp. 1-3. Hanson, D. J. (n. d.). *Alcohol Problems and Solutions*. 1-7. Jaeger, A. A. (2011, November). *Initiating and Referring Law. North Dakota Votes 2012* . Bismark, North Dakota, United States of America: State of North Dakota. Kiesbye, S. (2013). *Introduction to Should the Legal Drinking Age Be Lowered?: At Issue. Should the Legal Drinking Age Be Lowered?* , 1-3. Markoff, S. C. (2004, July 12). *Drinking Age*. Retrieved January 22, 2013, from PronCon. org: <http://www.drinkingage.procon.org/>