

Pennington

[Health & Medicine](#), [Alcoholism](#)



Pennington English 1- M/W 12: 30-1: 45 10/5/08 A Generation Wasted If I am old enough to go to war, vote, have an abortion, give consent to have sex, or have a smoke, then I should be able to have a drink. Those are the types of arguments the proponents for the eighteen drinking age will generally give, but there is more to consider when it comes to the topic of alcohol. In an article published in The Los Angeles Times, Shari Roan explains the pros and cons of the drinking age. She states that "... [there are] approximately 1,700 alcohol related deaths in the United States among college students each year" and if the drinking age gets set to eighteen, this number is more than likely to rise. Alcohol is a dangerous, mind altering substance that if used carelessly, can cause an immense amount of damage both physically and mentally to adults and young adults. Critics argue that teenagers in other countries with a lower drinking age are less likely to binge drink and be dependent on alcohol. However, Shari Roan from the LA Times explains, "... that studies show the younger someone starts drinking, the greater the likelihood of developing alcohol dependence". Countries with lower drinking ages have had severe problems with binge drinking amongst youth (Roan). This shows that teenagers do know how to drink in moderation. Most teenagers do not drink in moderation or measure their drinking; they drink carelessly to get drunk. Teens are developing their bad habits early on because nobody is teaching them moderation. In addition, there are health issues involved. If the drinking age were to be set to eighteen, the youth would be at greater risk of damaging developing brains cells. The human brain does not stop developing until our early twenties, making twenty one the perfect age to start drinking. Advocates for eighteen argue that drinking

in moderation does not cause damage to the brain, but not all teenagers drink that way. Binge drinking has also been responsible for 15-25 percent of suicides and 65 percent of suicide attempts (Post note). In addition, excessive drinking can lead to accidents, falls, injuries to the body, unconsciousness, drowning, unsafe sex, or vomiting. Overall, binge drinking can affect your health both physically and mentally, especially if under the age of twenty. The key to safe enjoyment of alcohol is maturity, but maturity comes with age. A young adult would not make responsible choices with alcohol, especially when dealing with school and work. Even though the age of eighteen is considered an adult, most of the eighteen year olds do not have the kind of experience and maturity that adults have. Alcohol is just another distraction for both high school and college students, something that they do not need. It would also tempt younger children to want to start drinking. If anyone would even consider lowering the drinking age to eighteen, why not make it lower or not have one at all? It would be the. By keeping the legal drinking age at twenty one, it would discourage a couple of kids to not even try it. Those who are already alcoholics and those who want to drink illegally will find their way to do it, but its best to discourage teens from making those poor choices at such a young and vulnerable age. What we should be looking at instead of lowering the drinking age is to educate the youth about the dangers that come with alcohol consumption; educate them about the consequences and the health effects that come with careless binge drinking. Instead of teaching "...abstinens only..." school based programs should teach moderation and how much is too much (Brink). That way, the youth can know the long and short term health and mental effects

that occur, before they try and experiment with alcohol at an early age. Take for example Gordie Bailey Jr.'s story who was just a regular 18 year old college freshman who became a victim of binge drinking. This disaster started at Bailey's university where he was pledging to join a fraternity. Gordie and other pledging young men were told to drink large amounts of whiskey and wine. After that, they were driven back to the frat house after midnight where Bailey passed out on the couch. The fraternity tradition called for members to write on the body of any pledge who had passed out without taking their shoes off first. So while Bailey was passed out on the couch, possibly dying, all his so called "brothers" did was write profanities all over his body. The next morning Bailey was found face down on the floor, dead. The alcohol had shut down his entire central nervous system. His blood alcohol level was 0.328 percent, four times the legal limit for driving in Colorado. Gordie's death was completely unnecessary and avoidable. He obviously did not know his body well enough to know when enough alcohol was enough and could have just refused a drink completely. His fraternity brothers were also at fault too, some being over the age of twenty one. They should not have pressured Gordie or any of the other under age pledges to be drinking, especially binge drinking (Heckel). This just shows that adults, along with kids are not making responsible choices when it comes to alcohol. These kids need to be educated first about how deadly alcohol can be to their still developing bodies instead of letting them find out first hand. The drinking age should not be lowered to eighteen because of our youth who are not prepared to face the deadly consequences that come with excessive drinking. Alcohol alters your mind when consumed in excess, thus altering

judgment. Keeping it at twenty one will secure safety throughout the nation and will keep the alcohol related deaths down. Drinking should be a privilege not just something given to someone. It is a drug, a drug that can be addicting and difficult to let go, especially if one started at very young age. Education should be what we are looking at. Instead of taking the easy way out and just lowering the age, we should strive to inform young adults of the risks of alcohol consumption. Works Cited Page Brink, Susan. " Drink Wisely-Taught by Whom?" LA Times 1 Sep. 2008. Hanson, David J. What about the Drinking Age? 2007. 9 Sep. 2008 <http://www2.potsdam.edu/hansondj/youthissues/1064263072.html> Heckel , Aimee . The Daily Camera: News. 3 Dec. 2008. 25 Oct. 2008 http://www.gordie.org/press/daily_sept1805.html Roan, Shari. " Tempest in a Bottle." LA Times 1 Sep. 2008. Roan, Shari. " And at the Colleges, a Crackdown." LA Times 1 Sep. 2008.