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Should We Lower the Drinking Age to 18?

It is a fact that pleasure drinking represents an increasing issue in the United States and abroad. The situation is even more critical when it comes to the younger generation. In this respect, many countries and governments are attempting to resolve the problem of underage drinking through increasing the drinking age. In the US, the legal drinking age is 21. In this regard, the debate over whether or not this limitation should be lowered to 18 has been a continuing issue in the country. To a great extent, the given law helps preserve the younger generation, the communities where they reside, and society in general from the adverse effects of alcohol consumption. Despite the fact that such things as personal liberties and freedom have a deep value in the United States, the drinking age should not be lowered to 18 due to its physiological and psychological impact on the individual.

To begin with, it is worth indicating that the drinking age was first lowered to 18 in many states across the country during the Vietnam War (Kinzie and Hohmann). A countless number of young men were obliged to serve in the army, fighting and dying for their country far away on another continent. Hence, people were questioning of how it is possible to ask those young people to die for their homeland and forbid them to have a drink if they want. Nevertheless, the overall number of alcohol-related fatal traffic accidents involving young drivers began to increase drastically (Kinzie and Hohmann). As a result, the US government forced states to raise the drinking age back to 21. As for the present, there are many proponents

of lowering the drinking age to 18. In particular, they argue that if a young person is old enough to vote and serve in the military, it is normal for them to have the right to consume alcohol. It is also common to hear that a lower drinking age perfectly works in Europe. What is more, some non-governmental organizations and associations stress that the illegality of alcohol consumption only aggravates the situation (Griggs). Despite all these statements, it is worth emphasizing that the drinking age should not be lowered due to health risks, drunk driving, and aggressive and violent behavior.

As for the first reason, alcohol consumption has apparent negative health consequences. After all, it is a fact that the given limitation was not only implemented to prevent youngsters from committing thoughtless actions. As such, the given law was implemented since alcohol consumption can trigger severe health issues in teens. According to recent data, almost 45% of young people attending 4-year colleges consume alcohol on a permanent basis. At the same time, it is estimated that nearly 40,000 college students require specialized medical treatment annually to cope with the severe effects of alcohol poisoning (Anderson 154). Furthermore, there is a horrible statistic of almost 200 college-age persons (ages from 18 to 23) who died of alcohol poisoning in the period from 2011 to 2015 (Anderson 156). Considering all the facts mentioned above, it can be stated that lowering the drinking age would endanger a growing number of young Americans.

Another reason why the drinking age should not be lowered is the risk of an increase in drunk driving cases. In fact, according to statistics, nearly 20,000 individuals die annually in traffic accidents related to drunk driving (Fynbo). It is hard to deny that drunk driving remains an increasingly relevant public safety issue. The situation is particularly urgent since drinking and driving directly correlates with the younger generation. For instance, according to recent

statistics, in 2015 the highest drunk driving rates were among individuals aged from 21 to 25 (24.1%), and 18 to 20 (almost 16%) (Fynbo). It is interesting to note that after age 25, those indicators tend to decrease. In this respect, it is reasonable to state that by lowering the drinking age to 18, 16% of 18 to 20-year-olds who tend to consume alcohol before driving would increase considerably. What is more, it is possible to assume that fatal accidents caused by drinking and driving would also increase.

The last reason to keep the alcohol banned for youth is its direct relation to the generation of aggressive and violent behavior. It is estimated that alcohol has a direct relationship to the formation of aggressive sexual behavior, substance abuse, academic failure, and irreversible changes in the structure and function of the brain (Anderson 174). According to national data, nearly 90% of homicide offenders, 64% of sexual offenders, and more than 30% assault criminals were in a state of alcoholic intoxication while committing crimes (Anderson 182). It is no secret that adolescence is a period of increased impulsivity as well as the inclination for destructive behavior, violence, and aggression. Therefore, lowering the drinking age to 18 can contribute to the increase of these cases.

It is worth indicating that those who propel the European pattern, where alcohol consumption is a somewhat moderate problem, with low statistics of drunk driving incidents, should consider one particular distinction. To be more precise, Europeans, in general, are more focused on the use public transport including trams, buses, subways, high-speed trains, and even bikes. Simply put, just because drinking and driving indicators are not so high on the European continent among the younger generation does not mean that such a tendency would work in the United States.

It is also crucial to stress that adolescence is a time of character building, personal

development, and academic performance. Alcohol, in turn, is a significant distractor and utterly unnecessary. Because alcohol adversely affects young organisms, incline them to drunk driving, and is a catalyst for the formation of aggressive and violent behavior, it is of particular importance to preserve the legal drinking age for youth in the United States.

Considering all the above, it can be stated that the idea to lower the drinking age to 18 may harm American society. The debate over whether or not to decrease the limitation of drinking age for the youth is a continuous issue in the country. Despite the arguments from the side of the proponents of the given idea, this law helps to preserve the younger generation, the communities where they reside, and society in general from the extremely negative effects of alcohol consumption. All the objective reasons mentioned above prove that the drinking age should not be lowered to 18. Ultimately, the arguments for lowering the legal drinking age are entirely unjustified and are not in the best interest of youth, in particular, and the society, in general.

Works Cited

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