

## Lowering the legal drinking age

In New York State the legal age to purchase and publicly consume alcohol is twenty-one. Many laws at the state and federal level require that people be only eighteen to do certain things. For example, when someone who is eighteen is accused of a crime they are tried in a court of law as an adult. However, when it comes to purchasing alcohol, eighteen doesn't cut it. In many European countries there is no legal drinking age. In most of these countries there is less alcoholism and abuse of alcoholic substances than in the United States. The legal drinking age should be lowered to eighteen.

One reason to lower the drinking age is to keep laws fair and consistent in our state. To drive after nine o'clock in New York a licensed driver must be eighteen - years - old. One must be eighteen to enter a bar or nightclub, or to tend a bar, according to state laws. If someone wants to purchase "adult" material or enter an "adult" club in New York that person must be eighteen. Lastly, to purchase cigarettes (a more addictive and physically dangerous drug) a person in New York needs only to be eighteen years old.

In the United States all eighteen-year-old men are required by law to sign up for the draft. If the U.S. were to become involved in a war, any or all of these men could be forced to fight in it. Our federal government feels it is okay to force eighteen-year-old men to fight and possibly die defending their country in battle. Our state should take that into consideration when deciding the legal drinking age. People who are forced to do that should at least be able to legally purchase and consume alcohol.

In many European countries like Spain, there is no legal drinking age. Children are exposed to alcohol from a very young age. Some people will even put a small bit of wine in a baby's bottle. Earlier access to alcohol allows a person to learn the responsibilities that come

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with drinking. In these countries, alcohol abuse and alcoholism are very uncommon; there are much lower alcoholism rates there than in the U.S.

Recently the Federal Food and Drug Administration announced that a small amount of alcohol each day might help lower the risk of heart disease. This is not true for everyone but most people. The FDA does not recommend that anyone start drinking for this purpose, but says that those who drink a small amount each day already may enjoy the effects... a healthy heart.

The legal age to purchase and consume alcohol in New York State should be lowered to eighteen. If the law were changed it would help keep state and federal laws fair and consistent, help reduce the percentage of Americans who suffer from alcoholism and alcohol abuse, and increase the health of some Americans.