PRO: The Minimum Legal Drinking Age should be lowered.

1. 18 is the age of adulthood in the United States, and adults should have the right to make their own decisions about alcohol consumption. Turning 18 entails receiving the rights and responsibilities of adulthood to vote, smoke cigarettes, serve on juries, get married, sign contracts, be prosecuted as adults, and join the military - which includes risking one's life. [5][6]

2. Lowering MLDA 21 to 18 would allow 18- to 20-year-olds to drink alcohol safely in regulated environments with supervision. 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. [7]

3. Higher traffic accident and fatality rates occur during the first few years of legal drinking regardless of age. [8] In 2009, the 21- to 24-year-old age group had the highest percentage of drivers in fatal crashes with blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) levels of .08 or higher – 35 percent. [9] Any increase in traffic accidents or fatalities in 18- to 20-year-olds would be offset by a decrease for those 21 and older. [10]

4. Many countries with MLDA 18 have similar or better drunk driving statistics than the United States. Although the United States increased the MLDA to 21 in 1984, its rate of traffic accidents and fatalities in the 1980s decreased less than that of European countries whose legal drinking ages are lower than 21. [8][9][10][11][12]

5. Drunk driving fatalities as a percentage of total traffic fatalities in the United States have steadily fallen since 1982, two years before the Uniform Drinking Age Act established an MLDA of 21. [13] This decline has occurred across all age groups and demographic categories, and therefore cannot be reliably attributed to MLDA 21.

6. Lowering MLDA 21 to 18 would make alcohol less of a taboo for adults newly entering college and the workforce, take away the thrill that many young people get from breaking the law, and make alcohol consumption a more normalized activity done in moderation. [14][15]
7. MLDA 21 is largely ineffective because the majority of teens continue to consume alcohol. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, underage drinking accounts for 17.5% ($22.5 billion) of consumer spending for alcohol in the United States. [16] In 2006, 72.2% of twelfth graders reported drinking alcohol at some point in their lives. [14]

8. High non-compliance with MLDA 21 promotes general disrespect and non-compliance with other areas of US law and encourages young adults to acquire and use false identification documents to procure alcohol. In an era of terrorism, illegal immigration, and other national security concerns, it is better to have fewer fake IDs in circulation and more respect for the law. [17]

9. MLDA 21 enforcement is given low priority or ignored by many law enforcement agencies due to resource limitations, statutory obstacles, perceptions that punishments are inadequate, and the time and effort required for processing and paperwork. An estimated two of every 1,000 occasions of illegal drinking by youth under 21 result in an arrest. [18]

10. Despite claims that lowering the MLDA to 18 would increase suicide and criminal activities by adolescents, MLDA 21 is not statistically associated with lower rates of suicide, homicide, or vandalism. In a 2002 meta-study of the legal drinking age and health and social problems, 72% of the studies found no statistically significant relationship. [19]

11. Drinking alcohol is an enjoyable activity. 18- to 20-year-old adults should not be denied that enjoyment when other pleasurable activities are legal at age 18.

12. Lowering MLDA 21 would reduce the number of underage people who are hurt from alcohol-related injuries or accidents due to fear of legal consequences if they sought medical attention. [7]

13. State governments should have the right to establish a lower legal drinking age that reflects their unique demographics, legal context, and history. The Uniform Drinking Act, which compelled states to set the legal drinking age at 21 by withholding ten percent of highway funding from states that kept the minimum legal drinking age at 18, is an example of federal government overreach into state affairs. Many states that were happy with their MLDA 18 bowed to federal pressure rather than lose millions in annual highway funds. [15]

14. Lowering MLDA 21 would be good for the economy because more people would legally be able to drink in bars, restaurants, and other licensed establishments. Revenue would increase for private business owners, and greater amounts of tax revenue would be collected by the government.