

# WHAT? LOWER THE DRINKING AGE NO WAY!

## And here's why . . .

A year old campaign by John McCardell, former President of Middlebury College, Vermont, to lower the legal drinking age from 21 to 18 has gained the support of over 100 university presidents as reported by the Associated Press, August 18, 2008. McCardell is the founder of *Choose Responsibility*. This effort to engage in discussion to lower the drinking age is called the **Amethyst Initiative**.

While some college presidents recognize that alcohol is a problem at their schools and underage drinking is prevalent, we suggest that their consideration of lowering the drinking age is **not** the answer to binge drinking. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union strongly disagrees with these academics and here's why!

- The brain is not fully developed until the age of 21 or even to the age of 25. Brain development in adolescence and into young adulthood can be impaired by heavy alcohol use. The hippocampus is responsible for learning and remembering. The hippocampus has been found to be 10 percent smaller in teens who abused alcohol than those of teens who did not abuse alcohol. [Dr. John Nelson, former President, AMA]
- Each year approximately 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking including about 1,000 deaths from motor vehicle crashes, 1,600 as a result of homicides, 300 from suicide, and hundreds from injuries such as falls,

burns, and drownings.[National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism]

- If the legal age becomes 18 (the age of some high school seniors) that means that 16, 17 and perhaps 15 year olds who do not have friends over 21 to buy alcohol, would probably be more able to obtain it. When the legal drinking age was 18 (before 1984) binge drinking rates among 12<sup>th</sup> graders were 41%; today they are 21%. (David Rosenbloom, Join Together.)
- People will say that 18 year olds can vote, marry, and go to war so why not drink? Perhaps the age to marry and go to war should be raised to 21 instead of the reverse. As to voting, many young people are informed and *when they are sober*, they are as intelligent about voting as their older counterparts.
- In most countries with lower drinking ages, intoxication is much more common among young people than in the United States. New Zealand experienced a raise in alcohol-related traffic crashes after they lowered its drinking age from 20-18. A leading police official in Great Britain is calling for the drinking age to be raised to 21 from 18.

So with alcohol use the No. 1 health and safety problem on every college campus, what are some solutions to the problem?

Availability of alcohol needs to be addressed. Enforcement of the laws needs to be primary. States that punish underage drinkers for using fake ID's had 14 percent fewer teen drunk-driving deaths than states without such laws.

Alcohol ads on NCAA games, encourage drinking. More pressure needs to be given to the NCAA to stop those ads. (NCAA rejected pleas from college presidents and other organizations in 2008 to stop alcoholic advertisements.)

The University of Wisconsin not only confronts students about underage drinking reports from

campus police but also contacts offender's parents when their college-age kids are caught drunk in public places. They are calling on parents to ask them to be partners and work to encourage the student make better choices. University administrators want the students to know there are consequences, but the goal isn't to be harsh and punitive - it is to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Ask the legislators to raise alcohol taxes. The alcohol tax revenue of 8.9 billion dollars does not come close to the public health and safety costs of alcohol that amount to 184 BILLION dollars per year including 62 BILLION per year cost of underage drinking alone. If the price of alcohol is increased, consumption would go down.

Work to change society's view of alcohol in the same manner as it currently views the usage of tobacco. *Surely the number of deaths saved as a result of having the drinking age at 21 is worthy of keeping it at that age.*

Let us reject John McCardell's Amethyst Initiative and instead work to reduce alcohol consumption at any age and encourage abstinence. Letters of thanks to those presidents that have NOT signed this statement are encouraged. Letters urging the following presidents to reconsider their actions and have their name removed would be appropriate.

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President Elizabeth Coleman  
Bennington College - VT  
President Scott D. Miller - Bethany College - WV  
President Bobby Fong - Butler University - IN  
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Chatham University - PA

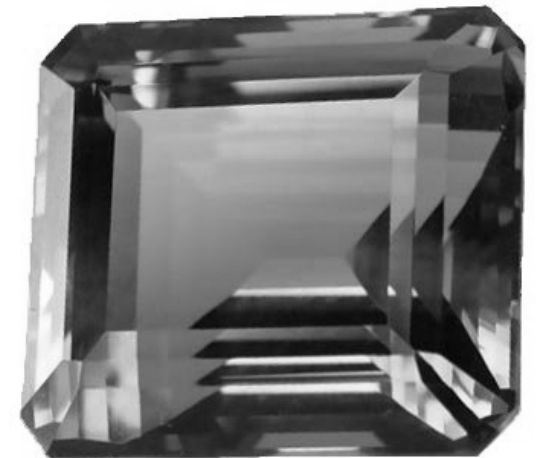
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# THIS AMETHYST



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 **Signal Press**  
1730 Chicago Ave • Evanston • IL • 60201-4585  
www.signalpress.org • info@signalpress.org  
Phone: (800) 755-1321 • FAX: (866) 503-WCTU