

## Lowering the Drinking Age Will Lead to Increased Violence, Risky Behavior & Victimization Among Students

### Student Alcohol Use, Violence & Risky Behavior

- Alcohol use is an independent risk factor for delinquent and violent behaviors among young people.<sup>1</sup>
- Adolescents who abuse alcohol are three times more likely to commit violent offenses than those who do not drink to excess.<sup>2</sup>
- Youth aged 12-17 who reported violent behaviors in the past year also reported higher rates of past year alcohol use compared with youths who did not report violent behavior.<sup>3</sup>
- 65.9% of those youth reporting heavy alcohol use, 56.8% of those reporting binge drinking, and 43.7% of those reporting past 30-day use of alcohol also participated in one or more of the following: a serious fight at school or at work; a group-against-group fight; attacking someone with the intent to seriously hurt them; stealing or attempting to steal something worth \$50 or more; selling illegal drugs; and/or carrying a hand gun within the last year.<sup>4</sup>
- Alcohol use among adolescents co-occurs with a range of other risky behaviors including violence, tobacco use, sexual activity, drinking and driving and suicide.<sup>5</sup>

### Student Alcohol Use and Victimization

- Those who drink, including adolescents, may experience an increased risk of violence because of reduced physical coordination, poor decision-making in threatening situations and isolation while out late at night.<sup>6</sup>
- Alcohol increases vulnerability to victimization above levels of vulnerability brought about by other factors.<sup>7</sup>

**Research substantiates the link between alcohol use, violence and victimization among adolescents. Lowering the drinking age from 21 to 18 will lead to increased violence and victimization in high schools and in our communities.**

**SUPPORT 21!**

## Footnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Komro, K.A., Williams, C.L., Foster, J.L., et al. (1999). The relationship between adolescent alcohol use and delinquent and violent behaviors. *Journal of Child Adolescent Substance Abuse*, 9(2):13-28.
- <sup>2</sup> Fergusson, D.M., Lynskey, M.T., Horwood, L.J. (1996). Alcohol misuse and juvenile offending in adolescence. *Addiction*, 91(4): 495-510.
- <sup>3</sup> Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2005). *The NSDUH report: Alcohol use and delinquent behaviors among youths*. Available: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k5/alcDelinquent/alcDelinquent.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Windle, M. (1999). *Alcohol use among adolescents*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- <sup>6</sup> Shepherd, J.P.(1998). Emergency room research on links between alcohol and violent injury. *Addiction*, 93(8): 1261–1262.
- <sup>7</sup> Shepherd, J.P.; Sutherland, I.; Newcombe, R.G. (2006) Relations between alcohol, violence and victimization in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 29(4): 539-553.