

American Council on Alcohol Problems

Resolution on the Legal Drinking Age

Whereas, the American Council on Alcohol Problems has a long and credible history for addressing alcohol policy and supports the Minimum Legal Drinking Age (MLDA) of 21; and

Whereas, there has never been an alcohol policy so well studied or more scientifically scrutinized than the MLDA; and

Whereas, the negative consequences of underage drinking costs the United States \$61.9 billion per year in traffic crashes, violence, property crime, suicide, burns, drowning, fetal alcohol syndrome, high-risk sex, poisonings, psychoses and dependency treatment; and

Whereas, during the early 1970s trends to lower the MLDA started in the U.S., providing many natural experiments, where research indicated youth traffic accidents increased after lowering the age; and

Whereas, *The Journal of the American Medical Association* published a study on underage drinking and addiction that showed youth who regularly consumed alcohol before age 21 were more likely to develop a diagnosable alcohol dependency than those who delayed alcohol consumption to age 21; and

Whereas, in 1984, the federal government enacted the Uniform Drinking Age Act, which withheld federal highway funds from states failing to increase their MLDA; and

Whereas, by 1988 every state had established the age 21 requirement and once again researchers were provided with many natural experiments across multiple states to assess the policy's effects on alcohol consumption and related problems among youth; and

Whereas, further research studies indicate a higher minimum legal drinking age is effective in preventing alcohol-related deaths and injuries among youth (Wagenaar); and

Whereas, research confirms that Europeans have rates of alcohol-related diseases (such as cirrhosis of the liver) similar to or higher than those in the United States population; and

Whereas, studies show that heavy drinking and binge drinking rates are higher in Europe than in the United States;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the American Council on Alcohol Problems send a letter to every college/university president who signed the "Amethyst Initiative," and urge them to reconsider their decision regarding lowering the MLDA of 21.