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Drinking age battle isn't over yet

Those who think a national 21-year-old drinking age will become a fact by 1986 may soon have to think again. Though federal legislation seems bent on forcing the states into adopting higher drinking age laws by withholding 10 percent of their federal highway tax money if they don't, a number of observers think some states won't comply. They'll be forfeiting big bucks if they refuse — a total of \$22 million for Wisconsin in 1986 and 1987, for example — but some analysts say the lost highway taxes will still be less than projected losses in taxes and fees associated with liquor sales.

For students, however, the point is justice, not money. Bob Bingaman, spokesman for the United States Student Association, says the law is patently wrong-headed and student associations across the country are gearing up to make their state legislatures understand that. "On a gut level, I think it's a civil rights issue," he says. "How can you tell this age group, 'You can vote. You can sue and be sued. You can marry. You can serve in the military, but you can't drink.'? It's absurd!"

Bingaman says his group and others are considering a constitutional challenge to the law in court. The 25th Amendment reserves control of alcohol to the states, and critics see the coming battle over the drinking age as a states' rights issue.

At the U. of Texas-Austin, Rodney Schlosser, student body president, says he expects the battle to break there in January. "I don't want to let the whole world know about all our bullets before we shoot them," he says, but suggests the students' general plan of attack will include lobbying, educational efforts, and the drafting of positive, alternative legislation.

DWI LAWS THE ANSWER?

Schlosser points to the fact that Minnesota's traffic fatalities increased four-fold after raising its drinking age to 19. Teens had no trouble getting liquor, but took to the dangerous and boring privacy of their cars to drink it. It was only when Minnesota passed stiff driving-while-intoxicated or DWI laws that traffic fatalities began to decrease.

That's the kind of legislation Schlosser has in mind, and, in fact, the Texas Student Lobby has been on record behind tougher DWI laws for the last two years. "We would like to have a positive DWI legislation ready to go in January so legislation can vote for something instead of just having to vote against the 21-year-old law," he says. Schlosser expects no trouble in mobilizing massive student support

for these efforts. The law, he says, has raised their consciousness more than any other issue in the last ten years because it directly touches their lives as defense spending and other issues don't.

At the U. of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, president of the student body Randy Curtis says they're trying to mobilize the support of private business in fighting the new law. Students have blanketed the supermarkets in town and all the bars on Water St. with petitions, and they're stumping for a public awareness club called "I am driving." Participating bar owners agree to provide free, non-alcoholic drinks to club members who, in turn, act as chauffeur for the drinking members of their group. Memberships cost nothing and participation, says Curtis, is high.

Meanwhile two researchers at Boston U. are lending their support to the under-21-year olds. Research by Robert Smith and Ralph Hingson in the School of Behavioral Science suggests that raising the drinking age has no effect on overall traffic deaths or on the drinking habits of teenagers. "I think teenagers have been unfairly singled out," says Smith.

Smith and Hingson studied fatal crashes in the three-year period after Massachusetts raised its drinking age from 18 to 20 and compared those patterns with New York which did not raise its legal drinking age. They found New York fatalities declined almost as much as Massachusetts. Moreover there was no reduction among 16- and 17-year-olds, the group primarily targeted by the new law.

CONCLUSIONS FAULTY

The Boston researchers have serious reservations about the conclusions Congress drew from the study it looked at in drafting the 21-year-old drinking age law. That study looked at statistics from nine states which raised their drinking ages, and found a 28 percent reduction in single-vehicle, night-time crashes (those most associated with alcohol). But the survey found only an 11 percent reduction in overall crashes — a percentage statisticians say could be accounted for by chance variation. As Hingson puts it: "They have 'suggestive data' but not 'conclusive evidence.'"

The Smith-Hingson study included an opinion survey as well, and from the answers to those questions, they conclude that attacking teenage drunk driving through such punitive legislation may simply foster cynicism toward the legislative process and a disregard of law enforcement. At best, raising the drinking age to 21 would reduce fatal traffic crashes by 2 percent, or 1,500 lives a year.

Ironically, solid data exists to prove that mandatory seat-belt and airbag laws, which Congress has deferred until 1989, would reduce fatalities 15 to 30 percent or a minimum of 15,000 to 20,000 lives. Also, says Hingson, passive restraints do not require enforcement to be effective as do both higher-drinking-age and DWI laws.

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New policy for searching rooms and vehicles

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: Meredith College takes seriously its Honor Code System. Upon arriving at Meredith College, a student understands that she is to uphold the Honor Code at all times. Possession and consumption of alcohol-illegal drugs on the Meredith campus is a serious violation of the Honor Code. The SGA Executive Committee reserves the right to enter a student room or student motor vehicle in the case of suspicion that an Honor Code violation of theft or possession of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs has occurred. The procedure for room-motor vehicle searches is the following:

1. The SGA Executive Committee shall have the right to conduct searches of rooms and-or motor vehicles which are on the campus. After informing a student of the general purpose for the search, members of the Executive Committee or other members of the Executive Branch of the SGA designated by the President of the Association will request permission of the occupant to search her room or motor vehicle. If a student does not consent, the Executive Committee reserves the right to enter anyway. The search will be made immediately.

NOTE: Honor Council Chair, although a member of the Executive Committee, will not be asked to conduct searches.

2. Searchers will present the attached document with a statement to be signed by the occupant of the room to verify that the room was searched according to the prepared checklist. This document includes: a. Occupant's name, room number, date of search, names of searchers, and checklist of places to be searched (i.e. closets, desks, drawers, medicine cabinets, bathrooms, storage spaces, ceilings, refrigerators, motor vehicles, and

personal effects.); b. List of items confiscated; c. Space for additional comments to be made by occupant.

This document will be signed and dated by the occupant, the searchers, and the Residence Director (when present) assisting the search. If the occupant refuses to sign the document, she may state her refusal in writing. Any refusal to sign document will be noted on the document.

3. During the search of an individual room, at least one Residence Director should be present if feasible under the circumstances. If the searchers deem advisable, a campus security guard may be requested to be present.

4. If there is suspicion of several students on the same hall, all of the rooms on that hall may be searched.

5. Search of an entire hall:

At the beginning of the search, students will be instructed to gather in the hall parlor where the procedure for the search will be read and explained.

At that time, students desiring to study may be escorted to their rooms to obtain their books. Students will not be allowed to use their telephones or the hall telephone during the search for reasons of confidentiality.

After their rooms have been searched, students may return to the parlor or they may leave the hall.

After an entire suite has been searched, the students in that suite may return to their rooms.

Students not living on the hall will not be allowed on the hall during the search.

At least two Residence Directors should be present during the search whenever feasible. One will be assigned to a designated area (i.e. hall parlor), while the other will be present in the room during the actual

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Damage deposit

by Cynthia Church

For the first time in Meredith College's history a \$50 damage deposit has been required of all on-campus students, said Charles Taylor, Vice-President of Business and Finances.

At the beginning of the fall semester students paid the \$50 fee to cover any unnecessary damage to the rooms while living on campus. The fee will be refunded to the students upon graduation or withdrawal from school.

The fee was instated to help prevent "abuse" of school property by the students, said Taylor. "Once the students are gone, you can't hold them responsible (for the damage). The fee will assure students respect for the housing facilities."

"Instead of cleaning the drawers out, students will take the whole drawer home," Taylor said.

There have also been problems with chairs and head boards missing. Now students will pay to repair or replace these items instead of the money coming from the maintenance fund.

Removal of materials from the walls

such as nails and putty will result in a \$20 fine. The repainting or papering of walls or woodwork will take the entire deposit.

The repair of large holes from attached bookshelves and cabinets will cost \$30.

The "schedule of charges" distributed by the Dean of Students' office states damage to furnishings and room accessories such as the missing of furniture, the defacing of furniture requiring refinishing, and the replacement of carpet and telephones will demand the full deposit each.

The schedule of changes also states that "when the cost for damage in a room exceeds the maximum damage deposit, responsible students will be required to make full restitution."

Basically the same procedure will be followed at the end of the school year when the students check out. However, no definite procedure exists now.

This school year alone, Meredith College collected about \$60,300 in damage deposits. This money will be placed in a separate interest gaining account. The interest made will be given to the Meredith Parents Association.

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