One side: Lower the drinking age (or at least, reconsider it)
- Amethyst Initiative (456-57) calls for re-evaluating, Balko supports this
- Gitz calls for consistency in the age of adulthood (lower drinking age or raise other ages)
- Sullivan mentions 19 as an option

Supporting point:
- 21 has led to secretive binge drinking among college students (Amethyst)

Supporting evidence:
- Binge-drinking stats (Evensen)
- Testimony from a doctor and police officer at a university (Sullivan)
- Voas disagrees, but does not give evidence.

Supporting point:
- Drinking age at 21 and other definitions of adult at lower age is illogical / unfair (Amethyst, Gitz at length)

Supporting evidence or value:
- Responsibilities and privileges of adulthood should happen at the same time. Voas questions this.

Supporting point:
- Drinking underage and using fake IDs “erode respect for the law” (Amethyst)

Supporting evidence or value:
- These seem plausible, but no evidence is given.

Supporting point:
- Underage drinkers will be afraid to call for medical help (Balko)

Supporting evidence or value:
- None given. Voas questions this.

Supporting point:
- Other countries have lower drinking ages; youth can learn to drink responsibly (Balko)

Opposing arguments responded to:
- 21 led to a reduction in fatal car crashes – Balko cites a study pointing out flaws in the data and suggesting other causes for the drop

Background information – a federal law in 1984 used highway funding as a way to pressure states to set their drinking ages at 21.
Another view: Keep it 21, or even raise it
Voas, Alcantara
Herman suggests 25

Supporting point:
21 led to a reduction in fatal car crashes

Supporting point:
Underage drinking also leads to teen pregnancy, sexual assault

Supporting point:
People who start drinking young have more alcoholism and other health problems

Supporting point:
Pop culture glamorizes drinking

Supporting evidence or value:
Stats from NHTSA (Voas) (questioned by Balko)
Evidence from New Zealand change (Voas)

Supporting evidence:
Stats on deaths, injuries, rapes (Voas)
Study by economists (Evensen)
Herman also gives stats, uncited.

Supporting evidence:
Stats on alcoholism (Alcantara, uncited), H&HS report on effects on brain (Alcantara)
Assumption: lower drinking age leads to people drinking at younger ages. Data on High School Seniors' Alcohol use could support this.

Supporting evidence or value:
Examples of TV shows (Alcantara)
Assumption: this is an alternate explanation for young people’s drinking behavior – addressing this could be a better approach than lowering the drinking age.

Opposing arguments responded to:
Age of military service is lower – Voas argues that military service and drinking are different in terms of the maturity needed.
Leads to more underage drinking – Voas disagrees but does not give evidence (is his authority strong enough to give this weight?)
Europe has lower drinking ages – Voas says they also have higher rates of binge drinking and drunkenness.
Points to think about:

What effect on behavior does a higher drinking age have? Which argument has the strongest evidence?

Less drinking by young people, fewer problems

More binge-drinking, more problems

If convincing and important, should all ages be 21? all 18, all 19?

How convincing are arguments about the disparity in ages for adult behaviors? How important a point is this?

What other ways of approaching this do we have?

Change the way alcohol is shown in pop culture.
Better educate young people in responsible drinking
Other ideas?
--How effective would these be?