Source Evaluations for Drinking Age Topic

The Amethyst Initiative is a group of college and university administrators. They have relevant expertise (what is happening on their campuses). The document presents a viewpoint on the issue. It gives reasons to support the position that the drinking age should be re-thought, though there is little support in this brief statement. Other sources may include information that can be used to support or refute these points.

Radley Balko is a professional journalist. He is not an expert on the topic, but because he has written for a number of publications (including the Washington Post currently), I would assume he is a well-regarded journalist. This piece was written for Fox News, which has a conservative viewpoint, and that may influence his argument. Certainly he is presenting a viewpoint, not just information, so his claims will need to be tested against information in other sources.

Bradley Gitz is a college professor, with expertise in political science. This article presents most fully the idea that there is an inappropriate inconsistency in having the drinking age be later than the age for voting and for military service, especially. I will definitely use it as a source of ideas if I want to talk about that line of reasoning. It’s not clear if his argument is based on his expertise as a political scientist or is more personal opinion, so I wouldn’t treat this as an inherently authoritative source.

Robert Voas has strong expertise on this topic (a Ph.D. in psychology and extensive research on drinking behavior). He doesn't cite any sources for his information, but his expertise makes me confident in citing this article for the information included in it. He does present an opinion, however, so there may be some bias in his selection of evidence, and I will need to check what he says against what appears in other sources. The Christian Science Monitor is a newspaper published by a religious organization, but it has a good reputation for responsible journalism.

Jay Evensen is the senior editorial columnist for the Deseret Morning News, according to the newspaper’s website. This is an opinion piece by a professional journalist. The paper itself is owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and gives its mission as “to be a leading news brand for faith and family oriented audiences in Utah and around the world.” This suggests that there may be a religious and conservative bent to the paper, but it appears to be a reputable news source. This is a good source for representing a position on the issue.

Joyce Alcantara was a teenager when she wrote this article, according to our textbook. The San Jose Mercury News looks like a typical local paper. Overall this is not an inherently credible source, but it can be useful for representing a viewpoint. Some of the sources of information are cited, which adds to the credibility of that information.

Andrew Herman appears to be a student at Bowling Green State University. He can speak from first-hand knowledge as a student, but doesn't have any other expertise on the topic. He doesn't cite any sources for information (even where there are statistics
included). I wouldn’t use this as a source for any specific information, but might use it if I like any of his ideas and want to talk about them further (for example, the suggestion that we should raise, not lower, the drinking age).

Caryn Sullivan presents both sides of the debate, and seems to have a good understanding of both viewpoints. She seems open-minded and fair, and St. Paul Pioneer Press looks like a solid local newspaper in a major city.

The Federal Trade Commission is a government agency, so this is a credible source. It appears to give data from a survey of high school seniors. It would be useful to know more about the survey (how the questions were worded, how many students were surveyed and how diverse, etc.), and I should bear in mind that some students could have lied on the survey.