

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

H.378

Introduced by Representatives Edwards of Brattleboro, Cheney of Norwich  
and Weston of Burlington

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Alcoholic beverages; lower legal drinking age; study

Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to study the implications of lowering  
the legal drinking age from 21 years to 18 years.

An act relating to a study of lowering the drinking age

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. COMMISSION TO STUDY LOWERING THE DRINKING AGE;

CREATED

(a) There is created a drinking age study commission to study the  
implications and costs of lowering the drinking age to 18 years. The  
commission shall be composed of 15 members representing various entities.

(1) The following entities shall each appoint a member to the  
commission:

(A) Department of liquor control.

(B) Department of public safety.

(C) Department of health, office on alcohol and drug abuse programs.

1           (D) State's attorneys' office.

2           (E) Department of education.

3           (F) The house of representatives, by the speaker of the house.

4           (G) The senate, by the committee on committees.

5           (2) The governor shall appoint a representative from each of the  
6 following entities:

7           (A) College or university administration.

8           (B) College or university law enforcement organization.

9           (C) Nonprofit youth services organization.

10          (D) Stop teen alcohol risk team (START).

11          (E) Center for health and learning.

12          (F) Mothers against drunk driving (MADD).

13          (G) Choose Responsibility.

14          (H) Vermont secondary or postsecondary students.

15          (b) The commission shall undertake a comprehensive analysis of the  
16 benefits and disadvantages of the present drinking age of 21 years and the  
17 implications of lowering the drinking age to 18 years. On or before  
18 December 1, 2009, the commission shall issue a report to the senate  
19 committees on judiciary and on economic development, housing and general  
20 affairs; the house committees on commerce, on judiciary, and on general,  
21 housing and military affairs; and the governor. The report shall include

1 findings and recommendations for state and federal action in light of those  
2 findings. In its deliberations, the commission shall consider at least the  
3 following:

4 (1) Experiences of other countries such as Canada and members of the  
5 European Union in which there is a lower or no minimum drinking age.

6 (2) The effectiveness and cost of a standardized alcohol education  
7 course coupled with provisional licensing for 18- to 20-year-olds to reduce  
8 underage and binge drinking.

9 (3) The impact of a lower drinking age with or without alcohol  
10 education and a provisional drinking license on the rates of alcohol  
11 consumption and abuse, including violence and drunk driving, by 18- to  
12 20-year-olds as well as those under 18.

13 (4) The effectiveness enforcement on underage drinking in Vermont and  
14 whether enforcement will be enhance by education and licensing of 18- to  
15 20-year-olds.

16 (5) The social and financial implications of a lower drinking age on  
17 prosecutions, courts, enforcement, lost time at school and work, treatment, and  
18 families.

19 (6) The National Minimum Drinking Age Act.

20 (7) Actions and proposed changes to drinking policies in other states.

1       (c) The members of the commission shall elect a chair. The commission  
2       shall meet at least five times between July 1 and November 15, 2009, and shall  
3       issue its report no later than December 1, 2009. Appointments to the  
4       commission shall be made within 20 days after passage.

5       (d) The department of public safety shall provide administrative support to  
6       the commission. The commission may also request administrative support  
7       from the department of liquor control and the department of education as  
8       needed.

9       Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

10       This act shall take effect on passage.