

1 S.157

2 Introduced by Senators Miller, Carris and White

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Alcoholic beverages; lowering drinking age

6 Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to undertake a study of the
7 implications of lowering the drinking age.

8 An act relating to a study of lowering the drinking age

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

10 Sec. 1. DRINKING AGE TASK FORCE; CREATED

11 (a) There is created a drinking age task force to study the implications and
12 costs of lowering the drinking age. The task force shall be composed of seven
13 members. No later than August 15, 2010, the commissioner, director, or chair
14 of the following entities shall each appoint a member to the task force:

15 (1) Vermont liquor control board.

16 (2) Vermont department of public safety.

17 (3) Vermont department of health, office on alcohol and drug abuse
18 programs.

19 (4) State's attorneys.

1 (5) Vermont department of education.

2 (b) The chair of the senate committee on economic development, housing
3 and general affairs and the chair of the house committee on general, housing
4 and military affairs shall each appoint a member from their committee to serve
5 on the task force without per diem pay and the two members shall serve as
6 cochairs of the task force.

7 (c) The task force shall take testimony from one or more members of the
8 following groups:

9 (1) College or university administration.

10 (2) College or university law enforcement organization.

11 (3) Nonprofit youth services organization.

12 (4) Stop teen alcohol risk team (START).

13 (5) Center for health and learning.

14 (6) Mothers against drunk driving (MADD).

15 (7) Choose responsibility.

16 (8) Vermont secondary or postsecondary students.

17 (9) Any other relevant or interested group or organization.

18 (d) The task force shall study the benefits and disadvantages of the present
19 drinking age of 21 and the implications of lowering the drinking age and offer
20 recommendations for state and federal action in light of its findings. The task
21 force shall present its findings and recommendations in a written report to the

1 senate committees on judiciary and on economic development, housing and
2 general affairs and the house committees on judiciary and on general, housing
3 and military affairs on or before January 15, 2011. In its deliberations, the task
4 force shall consider at least the following:

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

7 (2) The usefulness in reducing underage and binge drinking of a
8 standardized alcohol education course coupled with provisional licensing for
9 18- to 20-year-olds, including the cost to implement these programs.

10 (3) The impact of a lower drinking age coupled with alcohol education
11 and a provisional drinking license on the rates of alcohol consumption and
12 abuse by 18- to 20-year-olds and those under 18, related violence, negative
13 consequences, and drunk driving.

14 (4) The effectiveness of underage drinking enforcement in Vermont and
15 the impact on enforcement of education and licensing of 18- to 20-year-olds.

16 (5) The cost implications of lowering the drinking age in regard to
17 prosecution, courts, enforcement, lost time at school or 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 (e) The task force shall meet no fewer than five times, shall meet at least
2 one time before September 15, 2010, and shall issue a written report no later
3 than January 15, 2011.

4 (f) The legislative council and joint fiscal office shall provide
5 administrative support to the task force. The task force may also request
6 administrative support from the department of liquor control and the
7 department of education as needed.

8 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

9 This act shall take effect on passage.