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Pumphrey Law Scholarship Essay: Dangers of underage drinking and the impact it can have on a student.

It was under Woodrow Wilson's administration (1913-1921) that Prohibition came into effect. Among other religious, social and political reasons, one of the Prohibition's purpose was to save grain for food production. As a current Dietetics and Nutrition student at Florida International University, who is looking to pursue a second degree in Law and planning on focusing on Food and Nutrition Policy, I found the Prohibition to be a great example of how Law, Politics and Nutrition are strongly related. I certainly believe that everything that we put in our mouths i.e. food, beverages, medicine, supplements, etc. are mostly a result of the laws in place in our country.

Most of Americans are aware of the negative effects of alcohol. For the purpose of this essay, I surveyed ten of my non-nutrition college friends on whether they believed wine was "good" or "bad" for them. Eighty percent of them said wine was "good" for them. The reason why I chose wine is because it is one of the most controversial alcoholic beverages. According to *Food Politics* book by Marion Nestle, Ph.D, M.P.H., "in the late 1980s, in an effort to counteract declining sales and protests against drunk driving, the wine industry began to press for bottle labels extolling the benefits of wine consumption".

Wine indeed contains a compound called resveratrol, which is also found in the skin of red and purple grapes. Resveratrol consumed in the form of alcohol, in small doses, acts as an antioxidant and has cardiovascular benefits. However, in larger doses, has opposite

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consequences, damages several tissues and affects the parts of our brain that control our cognition, judgment, motor movement, coordination and balance.

According to the Dietary Guidelines, alcohol consumption should be moderate: one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. "One alcoholic drink-equivalent is described as containing 14 grams or 0.6 fluid ounces of pure alcohol". This means that a woman can only have one glass of 12 fluid ounces of regular beer, or only one glass of 5 fluid ounces of wine, or only one shot of 1.5 fluid ounces of proof distilled spirits per day. Although alcohol intake is highly regulated especially when it comes to traffic and crime violations, the amounts consumed easily exceed the numbers mentioned above.

As per the Florida Department of Motors and Vehicles (DMV) website, underage people who are found to have .02 or higher blood alcohol level, will be suspended to drive for 6 months. If the level is .08 or higher, regardless of age, license can be entirely revoked and driver can face fines and even imprisonment. Average costs for a DUI can amount to \$8,000. which includes fines, legal representation and auto insurance increases. The .02 limit is in place so that underage drivers do not consume one single alcoholic beverage and drive. Unfortunately, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "alcohol is the most used and abused drug among youth in the United States".

In a college environment, it is very common to know underage students who possess a fake ID, who are pressured by their peers to drink and who believe that "college is the best time to party". And I am quoting the latter statement verbatim. If this type of behavior does not stop, alcohol can become a big problem. In the case of DUIs, it can prevent a student from obtaining a desired job, alcoholism can cause low self-esteem, can destroy families and can have many other societal repercussions.

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Alcohol consumption can go from having small consequences like getting a bad grade in school to life-changing consequences like a car accident whereby lives are involved. Therefore, it is important to stress as part of our educational system the impact and how harmful alcohol can be from a health, financial, emotional and legal perspective.

## References

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