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### **OPINION**

## Decreasing drinking age fails to solve problems

Like any other beginning, the start of a new school year is reason to celebrate for college students. Back-to-school parties have almost become a staple occasion of college life, and for many, it's another excuse to drink.

Students don't view gluttony as a sin, at least when it involves alcohol

By playing beer pong, doing keg stands and taking shots, students are testing their alcohol limits and causing great concern for college officials.

The unease caused by binge drinking has led more than 100 presidents and chancellors from colleges and universities across the nation to sign a public statement known as the Amethyst Initiative, which calls upon elected officials to reconsider the drinking age.

The history of the current drinking age started in 1984 when Congress passed the National Minimum Drinking Age Act, which gave states that comply with the 21 year-old age limit full funding for federal highways. States that did not comply got 10 percent less.

The current drinking age is ineffective, according to the Amethyst Initiative Web site's statement.



Choose Responsibility, the organization responsible for creating the Amethyst Initiative project, attributed the legal drinking age with increasing binge drinking in 18-20 yearolds. Basically, underage students can't freely drink, so when they get the chance, they binge. The organization also credited the legal drinking age for making it harder to regulate drinking among young adults who instead of drinking in the light now drink in the shadow.

One suggestion from the Amethyst Initiative is to remove the 10 percent highway fund incentive, which would then allow states to lower the drinking age for 18-20 year-olds but still treating them as a special group who are required to take an alcohol education course in addition to meeting other standards before receiving a permit or license to buy alcohol.

Another suggestion included lowering the alcohol content

in beer for the less than 21 age group. Though you have to give uni-

versity leaders credit for opening up discussion about the binge-drinking problem facing many college students, it hard to really say if lowering the drinking age will solve alcohol woes.

Would lowering the drinking age really decrease drinking among students or would it condone it?

Students who wouldn't neces-sarily drink because they aren't 21 would have permission to do so, and it's perfectly legal.

At least with the legal drinking age being 21, underage students have a reason to refuse a drink. They are aware of the consequences of breaking the law if they get caught.

I'm not saying that 21 is the perfect number because if it was then we wouldn't be having this discussion. Not everyone waits until they're 21 to have their first drink. That's a reality.

But does this mean that we should make it easier for students to purchase and consume alcohol if the problem that we're worried about is excess consumption?

Lynn Ngo is a senior journalism major from Anahuac and the opinion editor for The Baylor Lariat.

#### *Opinion policy*

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Letters to the editor should include the writer's name, major, graduation year, phone number and student identification number. Non-student writers should include their address. Letters that focus on an issue affecting students or faculty may be considered for a guest column at the editor's discretion.

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# Lilley's exit not a big surprise

Editorial

With discord and unease mounting this spring among several university constituencies, it's no wonder the Baylor Board of Regents excused former President John Lilley of his duties as president.

The board took a tactful approach, offering Lilley the chance to fulfill most (if not all) of the two and half years remaining on his five-year contract. The board wouldn't even have begun to search for a president until January of next year.

The board was right in thinking this gradual transition into a new presidency would prove best for the university. One would think that as a Baylor alumnus, Lilley would have wanted to do whatever was best for his alma mater. Instead, his firing has once again put our university in the limelight.

Baylor has received an excessive amount of negative media attention in the last few years. The murder of Patrick Dennehy and the ugly basketball-team scandal it uncovered resulted in the NCAA placing Baylor on probation. Only recently has Coach Drew Scott been able to rebuild the team and push this memory out of the minds of fans.

The effects of the Faculty Senate's vote of no confidence in former president Robert

B. Sloan Jr. and his eventual resignation still divide the Baylor family. Faculty Senate members have said Sloan ran a fear campaign, attempting to intimidate his dissenters.

But instead of uniting the university after Sloan's rocky presidency, Lilley only alienated members of the Baylor family even further.

The board voted in May 2007 to cease Baylor's fee-forservice relationship with the Baylor Alumni Association. Although Lilley didn't make the decision, his remarks at alumni functions raised some eyebrows. At an alumni association meeting last fall to debate whether the association should officially endorse Baylor 2012, Lilley said the association would have more influence with the regents if the association would endorse the vision.

Lilley caused some waves again when he supported the university logo recommenda-tions made by a third-party marketing group. The recommendations included measures such as spelling out Baylor on football helmets and wherever space permits, and steering away from the Sailor Bear. At a student forum last spring, Lilley pooh-poohed students' concerns that the recommendations would mean a departure from university traditions. Then he

condescendingly called the recommendations "marketing 101."

Lilley also lacked openness when the Faculty Senate requested he provide them with figures showing how many candidates for tenure were rejected by his decision, as opposed to how many were denied based on the recommendation of the University Tenure Committee.

Perhaps the tenure fallout was the last straw for the board. This spring, 12 of 30 applicants for tenure were denied, an unusually high portion. Seven of the denied were granted tenure by reconsideration. Still, the news of

the denials didn't settle well with many professors, alum-ni, or students.

But Lilley deserves some credit for accomplishing a few feats for the university. Under his leadership, the university endowment topped \$1 billion. Baylor also climbed to the 75th slot in the "U.S News and World Report" college rankings, the university's highest ranking yet.

On the day of his firing, Howard Batson, chairman of the Board of Regents, cited promising athletics and increased enrollment as other accomplishments of his presidency.

But the positives here do

not outweigh the negatives. All the good Lilley did for the university was overshadowed by his firing. Our next president needs to be an individual with a strong track record of communication and trust. Before his post at Baylor, Lilley served as the president of the University of Nevada at Reno. When he left to take his post at Baylor, the faculty of UNR complained of low moral. This should have been a red flag to the regents.

Our next president should bring proof of their experience with building relationships, not of the prospect of becoming yet another negative chapter in Baylor history.



### Swing states keep presidential candidates on their toes

The Olympics have come to a close, but the spirit of competition continues for Americans. With the start of the Democratic Convention today, the hourglass has been turned over, marking just 71 days until the election.

But gold isn't the color to fight for in this race. It's purple.

Here's the basic math on swing states, the determinants of this year's election. The number of electoral votes needed to secure the presidency is 270. In 2004, President Bush finished with 286 votes, with Sen. Kerry following behind at 252 votes.

If Sen. Obama maintains all the states Kerry won in 2004, he only needs 18 more votes to win the election. According to Obama's 50 State Strategy drawn up by his campaign manager David Plouffe, those votes could manifest in several states that went red in 2004.

For starters, Iowa, with seven votes, and New Mexico, with five votes, are both Republican states leaning towards Obama. The Obama camp plans to hit these states hard, along with Nevada, Alaska and North Dakota - all states that are more pink than red, only slightly favoring Sen. John McCain.

And Georgia is one to watch, as well. With a whopping 15 votes, the state, which hasn't voted Democratic since 1992, is leaning towards McCain. But Plouffe expects McCain to lose two to four percent of his vote to third party Libertarian candidate Rep. Bob Barr of Georgia. In an August Wall Street point VIEW **BY ASHLEY KILLOUGH** 

Journal op-ed, Karl Rove, former senior adviser and deputy chief of staff to President Bush, outlined four key states for November

The first of which is Colorado, home of this year's Democratic Convention. Obama has enjoyed a small lead in the mountainous state until the last couple weeks, with polls revealing a narrow bump for McCain.

Also up for grabs is Virginia

with 13 electoral votes. The Old Dominion has voted Republican since 1964, but the G.O.P. only lead by eight points in the last election, putting those 13 votes in the picture for Mr. Obama.

Assuming McCain will take the same states as Bush in 2004, Rove said that if McCain loses Colorado and Virginia, he would likely have 264 votes. "To win, he would have to pick up a state Democrats are counting on winning, such as Michigan," Rove said. With a sex scandal facing Detroit's Democratic mayor and a \$1.5 billion tax increase issued by the state's Democratic governor, the Dems aren't running with good standing there, paving a possible path for a G.O.P. victory

Ohio, plump with 20 votes,

will also be a hot target, especially for McCain, as no Republican has won the presidency without it. McCain showed high numbers in the Buckeye state in March, which have since deescalated but are now moving their way back up, placing him just barely above Obama in the ĺatest polls.

While several key red states might go blue this election, Rove failed to emphasize on one state that may flip red. Both Gore and Kerry won Pennsylvania with 51 percent of the vote, but Obama is struggling with white, blue-collar workers and may not compete with McCain's independent spirit. With 21 votes, Pennsylvania would be huge for the Maverick.

At the national level, the gap

between the two candidates has closed and they are now in a dead heat, according Pew Research Center surveys. The upcoming conventions, debates and V.P. picks will certainly add to the dynamics of this colossal contest

So all this to say: it's about to get exciting. The Olympic metal counts may be finalized, but there's a much larger race to be won in the United States, one that doesn't involve world records but the leader of the free world. And with a constantly changing scoreboard, this competition will keep us all on our toes.

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#### THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

#### ACROSS

1 Not as much 5 Trigger-happy 9 Branchlet 14 Sicilian volcano 15 Novelist Morrison 16 Privileged few 17 Imagined 19 Basketball player 20 Actress Green 21 I haven't a clue 23 New York neighbor 25 Frozen precipitation 26 Lizard with sticky feet 28 Still 31 Where van Gogh painted like mad 34 Dawson or Gide 36 Sharer's pronoun 37 Christopher and Bruce 38 Poppy extract 39 Sushi choice 40 Slightly askew 41 Zest 42 Domineering 43 Will contents 45 Group psyche

47 Parts of ranges 49 Western state capital 53 Turns back 56 Pipe cleaner 57 Dunne of Hollywood 58 Duck product 60 Hold contents 61 Desirable assignment 62 King toppers 63 Middle of a tassel? 64 Boo-hoos 65 Do a postal job DOWN 1 Stop gripping 2 " Frome' 3 Audible expression of contempt 4 Wursts 5 Cultural 6 Morse Code symbol 7 Wildebeests 8 Holv cow! 9 Hide away 10 Glacial deposit 11 Without guilt 12 Single thing 13 Richard of "Chicago"

18 Wounds with a tusk 22 Cause anxiety 24 Giraffe relative 27 Preserved for later 29 Soaks up rays 30 Busboy's tote 31 Soap additive 32 Sports zebras 33 Soup ingredients, perhaps 35 Pieces for two 38 Unwraps 39 Tex-Mex menu items 41 Multi-speaker music systems 42 Goofy error 44 Even the score 46 Islamic women's guarters 48 Leaks slowly 50 BP merger partner 51 Not so many 52 Philosopher Mach 53 Chop into tiny pieces 54 Historic periods 55 Missile storage space 59Record a voice-over 69 Sowing items



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