*Two articles for keeping 16 the legal driving age:*

**Article 1 from Northern Star.info 02/06/2006**

In a country with more than 2.95 million people milling about, we're bound to bump into each other at some point. Sometimes the effects are loud and a bit too devastating, but raising the state's driving age from 16 to 18 is still an idea borne of bureaucracy and not wisdom.

Yes, our youngest happen to do most of the bumping and crunching out on the roadways, but that is still no reason to take away a privilege they have anticipated for years.

As with most things, driving is a skill that has to be learned. It's not a textbook exercise, but one that develops as experience builds. People can be told how to maintain control of their car, but until that roadside hedge nearly becomes a catcher's mit, nothing truly substantive can be learned.

Tough way to learn? Yes, but necessary.

Spurred on by the deaths of two minor-aged males, Illinois State Representative John D'Amico proposed the legislation last December, and said that since then he has received strong support for the move.

Well, that's fine. It still won't pass.

Parents, unsurprisingly, are just as upset as their children about the proposal. In an era where free time is a commodity, parents just don't have the option of driving their children around. Until the state gets a viable mass transit system, that issue won't go away.

Beyond the logistics, becoming a smart driver is wholly experiential, and gaining that experience at a young age would be the same as at 30, never mind 18.

Fine, younger people might be more prone to accelerative impulses than their elders, but they have hormones, give ‘em a break. They apparently can't help it and the stats prove it: "Sixteen year-olds have by far the highest rates of teenage passenger deaths per licensed driver and per mile driven," according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

What can be helped is the system by which high schoolers are made into drivers. Make it harder to get a license and punish more harshly those who drive with abandon.

Not even a decade ago, Illinois law mandated a curfew and no cellphone use policy for teen drivers. Parents also used to sign off on their child's capability as drivers, acknowledging they had spent at least 25 hours on the road with them.

Let's try that again. Those policies allowed children the freedom to gain experience and gave parents ample work-time to help pay off the repair bills.

Article 2 from **The Herald, by Staff Reporters 09/14/2008**

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety probably is right in saying the roads would be safer if the age for getting a driver's license were raised to 17 or 18. But, for a variety of reasons, we doubt that will happen anytime soon, if ever.

The roads almost certainly would be safer without 15- and 16-year-olds behind the wheel. Just do the math; this age group is among the most accident-prone of any, and making them wait until they are 18 would ensure that fewer teen drivers are on the road at any given time.

The institute, a research group funded by the auto insurance industry, points to New Jersey, the only state with a 17-year-old driving age, as a model. Crash-related deaths are lower there than in some nearby states. The institute reasons that holding off a year or two in allowing teens to drive would significantly reduce car crashes.

But the same argument could be made for just about any teen privilege. If we could keep them all locked up until they turn 18, everyone would be safer.

But the newly released teens would have little practical experience in the world. They still would all be potentially dangerous drivers until they got some practice.

Granted, the 16-year-old standard is arbitrary. Nonetheless, all but a few states use that standard.

Many, however, including South Carolina, have adopted graduated driving privileges, which is a sensible way to reduce the risk. In South Carolina, for example, teens can get a beginner's permit with a written test at age 15. They are required to have an adult over age 21 with them at all times when they drive.

After 180 days, they can get a restricted or conditional license that allows them to drive alone during daylight hours. After dark, an adult must accompany them.

They cannot get an unrestricted driver's license until they have held a restricted or conditional license for a year.

This process is a big improvement over the days when teens could take their driver's test on their 16th birthdays with no pre-conditions. The new policy at least requires that they have an adult present while they are developing their driving skills.

By the time they are 16, we think, teens need to be taking on some responsibilities themselves, including personal transportation. If they have to wait until they are 17 or 18, they remain dependent on parents practically until they ready to go off to college, join the military or take a civilian job.

Also, ask parents and many will admit that giving their 16-year-olds the keys is a big convenience. After years of carting kids to school and back and taking them wherever they need to go, it's a relief to let them drive themselves.

We have created a nation where driving is essential. Public transportation is not an option except in large metropolitan areas.

Kids need to assume responsibilities at some point. Letting them drive at 16 continues to make sense despite the obvious hazards.

Read more here: http://www.heraldonline.com/opinion/article11609189.html#storylink=cpy