

# Liberty and License

By Don Meinshausen, libertarian with license

*"Toleration means allowances, for the community as well as the deviant"*

Why not have a license or permit to drink? It might seem that as a libertarian I am taking liberties here. The goal is how to identify problem people before they become a problem to others. Many drinkers did not deal with their problem until a professional identified it as such to them in their youth. Some did not know that they became easily drunk until they became easily drunk after they drove to their first party.

In order to drive a car one has to have a driver's license. In order to hunt, or operate machinery and other activities a license or permit is also required. These permits usually require training and experience similar to that under actual situations. These permits show that the holder is a mature, responsible person who is knowledgeable about the risks and consequences of the activity. It is a sign that the person can be trusted to act in a responsible manner regarding what the permit allows the person to do. The permit has value and is a sign of adulthood. It is in deed; a rite of passage for many. A permit is not a right in that it can be revoked by a higher authority. It can be checked by a policeman or official just like an ID that shows the person is of age.

The difference between a permit and an ID is more than just a passage of time or even getting a high school diploma. These could be designed and administered with auto insurance companies and high schools. The knowledge course and exam is already done in high school driver's education and health classes Here pupils are made to watch gory movies and testimonies on the dangers of alcohol especially while driving on it.

There would be both a physical as well as knowledge test on the effects of alcohol on the specific applicant With the permission of the parents and the student there can also be a test involving the consumption of alcohol so that the individual knows at which point does ability and concentration suffer in front of a driving simulator. It is essential in that the exam involves actual experience with alcohol there might even be a genetic test to show allergies to alcohol and propensities to alcoholism. This should not, by itself, be a bar to such a permit. There could even be an extended test and video made to show the student how they behave when really intoxicated. Because of the embarrassment of such an exam it should be done privately and not by the government and the video given to the student or parent. Adolescence is embarrassing enough as it is. Even if signs and evidence show a propensity to or evidence of alcoholism I would not deny that person the right to enjoy alcohol in private parties or at home. Such a test may be required by some automobile insurance companies.

Of course if a holder of such a permit does misbehave or drive while intoxicated the permit is revoked, perhaps permanently. Drinking in private parties or clubs would be allowed though discouraged. Drinking and driving would still be against the law whether or not you have a drinking permit. Young people might be offered at 18 the choice of a driving or a drinking license for example. Expect this to be a law soon as the demand for more control over drunken driving increases. The insurance companies and alcohol industry might want to pay for the exam and administer it.

This would be a godsend to bartenders and bouncers. Troublemakers would be identified before they would even set foot in the door. Bartenders have to be good judges of character and

state of inebriation in order to stay in business. Police need to do so as well but they have immediate access to records as well as tools to detect blood alcohol levels and need not be diplomatic.

An extension of this procedure could also be a license to do drugs or dispense them. There would be a specific permit for each drug. The applicant would have to show knowledge of the drug and its risks and show themselves as being not dangerous even when very intoxicated. They might also be required to show that they can take care of themselves and their responsibilities. This should be no problems for marijuana users and a sizable amount of other drug users even heroin addicts. Many addicts, surprisingly, are able to hold jobs; do not engage in hostile behavior and not embarrass themselves in public. Though they do limit themselves by their addictions they are much more beneficial to the community by being out of prison as long as they can get a safe fix.

If they act in such a way that they are a danger to others then prison may be in order. If they learn to behave they could live in an addiction community as described in a previous essay. If they just lack the skills to earn a living or exist in society they would go, straight or stoned, to this addiction community. While addicts may be failures in family or other social situations they should not be imprisoned or denied a right to drive. A person may be civilly or criminally punished to discharge their financial obligations. I would not have such penalties for being rude or uncaring even to one's own family. It would be ineffective policy, guilt only goes so far.

A person would make sure as to not misbehave on alcohol or drugs because holding such a permit may be necessary for entertaining clients or just a mark of good character. Not having such a permit could admit you to a bar but not allow you to drink alcohol. Of course such a permit would best be voluntarily rather than governmentally administered and there should be local experimentation done to test it, especially with drugs that are now illegal. Clubs that allow the use of drugs that are illegal can keep use of drugs associated with good controlled conditions so that long term usage can be socially and scientifically monitored. This could increase safety and our knowledge of drug problems.