

Local Reps Split 4-3 On Age Bill

By KATHY MORAN
Giving 18 to 20-year-olds total adult rights and responsibilities was the issue. But when it came down to voting for a bill that would

include a lower drinking age, three of Observerland's state representatives cast negative votes.
"There was only one thing in it that I objected to—drinking

at 18," Rep. Richard Young (D-Deerborn Heights) said concerning the age of majority vote on Tuesday.
Young's opinion was echoed by Rep. James Tierney (D-

Garden City) who also voted against the bill. Rep. Raymond Baker (R-Farmington) also voted "no."
Reps. John Bennett (D-Redford Township), Marvin

Stempien (D-Livonia), Thomas Brown (D-Westland) and Joseph Forbes (D-Oak Park) voted for it.
AN AMENDMENT that

would have kept the drinking age and age for placing bets at 21 was defeated in the House by a 61-39 vote.
Observerland's Reps. Young, Bennett, Tierney and

Baker voted for the amendment while Stempien, Brown and Forbes opposed it.
The total bill passed the House by a 73 to 30 vote.
If passed in the State

Senate, the bill would become effective on Jan. 1 and would give all persons over the age of 18 the right to make contracts, draw up wills, place bets at race tracks, make their own medical decisions and be parties to legal actions.

In short, this age group would be asked to assume the full rights and responsibilities of an adult.
The only important right not covered by the bill was the right to vote in state-local elections. Michigan's Legislature has voted for ratification of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to allow that.

"WHAT WE WERE saying is that they (18 to 21-year-olds) can be held responsible for criminal acts and can be drafted and sent to war," Stempien said. "However, when it comes to making a contract or making a will, they can't do these and other things necessary to get along in our society."
Stempien said he voted for the age of majority bill to increase the responsibility of this age group and to resolve the contradiction in current laws.

But Young and Tierney said that including a lower drinking age in the bill will have serious repercussions. Both voted for an amendment that would have kept the drinking age and the age for placing bets at 21.

Though Baker could not be reached for comment, he also voted against the final bill and for the amendment.

YOUNG SAID a poll of school superintendents showed 56 per cent opposed to any change in the drinking age and another 38 per cent opposed to lowering it to 18.

"I think it will create problems with the 16 and 17-year-olds," he said. "I think they have found this to be true in New York State. When you turn 18, you will still have your peers, and I think this will result in alcohol circulating in high schools."

Tierney expressed similar concerns, adding he is afraid this age group will "mix gas and alcohol."

"I voted 'no' because I most sincerely believe that House Bill 4584 is not in the best interests of the young people of the state or the motoring public of our state," Tierney told the floor of the House last week.

Later he said that making liquor more easily available to youths would result in a carry over to 16 and 17-year-olds and increased drinking and driving.

BENNETT VOTED for the amendment to keep a higher legal drinking age, but, when it lost, decided to vote in favor of the bill.

"I had reservations about that (a lower drinking age)," he said. "But we tried to stop drinking by prohibition, and it didn't work. I think they are going to drink anyways."

"I feel if these young men can fight and die for their country, they are entitled to all other rights," he added.
Stempien said he hasn't "seen any basis in fact" that persons in this age group are not responsible enough to purchase liquor legally.

It is contradictory to say that "for making his last will and testament a person is responsible, but for a person to drink in public he is not," Stempien said.

"Either they are responsible or they are not."
"ALL THE DRINKING laws say is that if you don't purchase and have liquor in public, there is no prohibition against minors drinking. They can drink in their homes now — they just can't drink in public," said Stempien.

Agreeing, Forbes said, "If we are going to instill confidence in our youth we have to give them responsibility."

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