How The Law Treats You Differently When You Turn 18

Part 1 in the 'Lifting As We Climb' series of publications from the National Bar Association
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The National Bar Association’s “How The Law Treats You Differently When You Turn 18” publication is part 1 in the “Lifting As We Climb” series of publications from the National Bar Association (“NBA”). This publication is intended to inform, not to advise, persons about their rights and responsibilities once they reach the age of 18.

It is the desire of the NBA to foster a relationship with the youth of America, to encourage good citizenship, and to foster a pipeline for future members of the legal profession. The publication is the result of the efforts of the NBA’s Pipeline Diversity Initiative formed by NBA President Demetrious Shelton and chaired by Lawrence Hinkle, Esq.

For dissemination to the high schools of America and its territories.
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With a few exceptions, a person who has not reached the age of 18 has very few legal rights which he or she can assert for themselves. For instance, you may not sign legally binding contracts such as a contract for the sale, purchase, or lease of a home, or may not obtain a credit card in your own right. Upon reaching age 18, however, you may ratify or make legal anything you signed before reaching age 18. You may not vote, hold office or, in some instances, be responsible for certain criminal behavior. Upon reaching the age of 18, however, you may do most things an adult may. One notable exception is the purchase of alcohol.

This pamphlet is intended to present you with a brief summary of certain rights and responsibilities which you gain upon your 18th birthday. It is not providing you with legal advice. You should contact an attorney to represent you when needed for matters contained herein.

Finally, you should note that the law on various subjects changes from state to state. The bar association from your state is a resource for you in learning your specific rights and in finding an attorney to advise you if you or your parents do not have a relationship with an attorney. A reference guide for online websites is provided at the end of this pamphlet.
About the National Bar Association

Founded in 1925, the National Bar Association (NBA) is the nation’s oldest and largest national network of predominately African American attorneys and judges. It represents approximately 44,000 lawyers, judges, law professors and law students and has over 80 affiliate chapters throughout the United States and around the world.

The objectives of the NBA “…shall be to advance the science of jurisprudence; improve the administration of justice; preserve the independence of the judiciary and to uphold the honor and integrity of the legal profession; to promote professional and social intercourse among the members of the American and the international bars; to promote legislation that will improve the economic condition of all American citizens, regardless of race, sex or creed in their efforts to secure a free and untrammeled use of the franchise guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States; and to protect the civil and political rights of the citizens and residents of the United States.”

For additional information about the National Bar Association, including its signature youth programs, please visit www.nationalbar.org.
When you reach the age of eighteen (18), you will be eligible to join the military. Although both men and women can enlist, and men and women both serve in all branches of the military, only men are required to register with the Selective Service Administration. You may sign up at your local United States Post Office. Even though there is no military draft now, you must sign up when you reach age eighteen (18). This is a requirement of the federal government, not the various state governments.

What information is required to register?
The following information is required for the form used to register: your name, social security number, your legal address, and your date of birth. Anytime your address changes, you are required to notify the Selective Service of such a change until you reach age 26.

What must a person do who opposes service in the military?
The Selective Service Administration respects certain conscientious objectors, that is, a person who opposes war by any means on the basis of a religious, moral, and/or ethical belief system. You may not be required to serve in actual combat, but you are required to register anyway. Exceptions only happen when a draft is instituted by the government in the time of war.

What is “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell”?
When you join the military, you are not entitled to exercise your right of sexual preference. This is under review and may be changed but, for now, know your rights and what you can and cannot reveal about your sexual preference. Your behavior, although natural to you, may get you expelled from the military.
**CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES**

**VOTING**

When you reach age 18, you are entitled to register to vote. Our system of government in the United States is a republican form of government, that is, we are represented in our cities, counties, states and country by men and women who make laws on our behalf. It is our civic duty to participate in all elections. On your birthday, treat yourself by registering to vote. Be a responsible citizen and participate in all elections.

**Am I automatically eligible to vote?**

You must be a resident of a state for at least 30 days to vote. How long you must live in a state depends upon the particular law of your state and it does vary from place to place. You should consult your local elections board to see just how long you must live in your state to register. Once you register to vote, you must re-register every time you move, change your name, or change your party affiliation.

**Where do I register to vote?**

Usually, you may register at your local branch of the post office, your city hall, or your county or parish elections board. Your local elections board may also be called the registrar of voters. You should call your local or state elections board to get the location nearest your home where you may register.

**Where do I vote?**

There are places called “precincts” where you vote. They are also referred to as “polling places”. They may be in a church, a school, a bank, or any other place the elections board designates. When you register, they will give you the place where you may cast your vote. These places may change from time to time, so consult your local newspapers or elections boards to see where you may vote. Also, if you are not going to be in town on the day of the election, you may vote “early” at the elections board or by mail using an “absentee ballot”. You may order such an absentee ballot from your elections board who will instruct you how to fill out and when your ballot must be received. Most states have elections on a Tuesday. In such cases, early voting occurs at the elections boards the preceding Friday, Saturday and Monday. Some states vote on Saturdays. All states vote for the President and members of Congress on the same day. We vote for members of Congress on the first Tuesday of November in even years and for the President on the first Tuesday in November every four years.

**Is my right to vote absolute?**

No. In some states, you lose your right to vote if you are convicted of a felony. Some states take away your right forever, but some allow you to vote again after so many years have passed. Check with your local election board to learn your rights.
In most cases involving law suits or criminal cases, you are entitled to a trial by jury. The jury decides liability in a civil case and it decides guilt or innocence in a criminal trial. How juries are chosen may vary from state to state. Some use the driver’s license registration lists. Others use the voter registration lists.

**Are all persons who reach age 18 entitled to serve on a jury?**

No. Eligibility for jury service changes from state to state, so you have to check your local laws to see whether you can serve. In some states, a person who has a felony conviction is not entitled to serve. In others, lawyers, judges, police and sheriffs are not entitled to serve. In some cases, you may be entitled to serve but may be excluded for different reasons. Some reasons for exclusion may be:

i. you are caring for a sick or disabled relative and to serve would be a hardship on that person for whom you are caring;

ii. you are a surgeon and your patients would be at risk if you had to be away from your surgery schedule;

iii. you tell the court you cannot be fair and impartial to the parties involved in the trial.

**Do I get paid and/or will I lose my job if I serve?**

There is a small juror stipend and, sometimes, money to pay for parking and mileage. This varies from place to place. Employers are not allowed to fire you from your job because you have been called to serve on a jury.

**What happens if you do not serve?**

The constitution of the United States guarantees you a right to trial “by a jury of your peers”. What does this mean? It means like-minded or similarly situated people should be able to judge your case. It is your civic duty to serve and, by doing so, you guarantee that juries are representative of a cross-section of the citizenry of this country. It is not “someone else’s” responsibility, it is yours. Do not avoid jury duty.
**FAMILY RELATIONS**

**Do I need permission to marry?**
No. Once you turn 18, you may marry without anyone’s permission. Before you reach 18, you may need the consent of your parents. The exact age you no longer need your parent’s permission does vary from state to state. Some states allow boys to marry without parental consent before they will allow a girl to so marry. If you have not yet reached age 18, check with your local bar association to determine the exact age you no longer need your parent’s permission. Some states may also require the consent of a judge if you have not reached age 18.

**Where must I marry?**
You are not required to marry in a church by a member of the clergy. A judge may marry you at the courthouse.

**Who is responsible for a child?**
Both parents are responsible for their children whether they are married or not. The courts may order child support from either parent. If you get married but are later divorced, the courts will decide who gets custody of the child, who will pay, and how much they will pay. If the parties agree, the court will accept the agreement reached by the parties unless the agreement is determined not to be in the best interest of the child or children.
CREDIT

We urge responsible handling of money. This cannot be stressed enough. Credit is a way you may purchase or pay other debts through the use of a credit card or a loan from a bank or credit union. You are promising to pay back money you are borrowing. Unless you are using a credit card as a way to avoid carrying cash, you should be mindful you may be about to purchase something you cannot afford. In other words, you are charging something to a credit card you do not have enough cash to purchase. Once you use the card, you will have to repay the amount you charged to that card plus interest and/or fees the bank may charge. The amount of interest will vary from card provider to card provider and from state to state.

Who can get credit and from whom?

Just because you are 18 years old does not mean you will get credit from someone. The law, however, says you cannot be denied credit on the basis of your age (if you are over 40), your sex, marital status, race, color, religion, national origin or because you may be receiving public assistance. People who work or otherwise have a steady income large enough to show they can cover their living expenses and pay their debts and some money left over to save usually can get credit. Also, if they can show they have a history of paying their past debts in a timely manner, it will help their chances of getting more credit.

Lastly, your history of paying, your income and your work history are included in what is called a credit report. Several companies keep this information and refer it to banks and other institutions that are considering lending you money or extending you a credit card. Your credit report may also be used by a landlord who is considering leasing an apartment to you or a prospective employer who is considering offering you a job. This is why it is so important to manage your credit wisely.
MORE ABOUT CREDIT

What kind of credit is extended and how does it work?

Generally, several types of credit cards are available to you -- Visa, MasterCard, or store cards like Walmart, Target, Macy's, Nordstrom and the like. Credit is also extended to purchase a car or a home.

You apply for a loan or a credit card and, if approved, you will be told how much money is approved for you. This is called your “credit limit”. Your credit limit is the most the bank will loan you or how much you can charge on that credit card. Each month you will be sent a bill or a statement showing how much you charged and how much they want you to pay that month on your outstanding balance. If you do not pay the amount required, you will be charged a late fee and may have your card cancelled. In the case of a car loan or a home loan, you may be sued and can have your car taken back or you may be required to leave your home.

If your credit card is lost or stolen, you should call the bank immediately and cancel the card. You will not be responsible for charges made by anyone who finds and uses your card after you reported it. There may, however, be a minimal amount for which you may be responsible. Read the terms of your credit card or your loan when you are approved.

If you are having trouble with charges appearing on your bill in error and the company will not straighten them out to your satisfaction, you should contact the Attorney General of your state. That office usually has a consumer rights division to assist you with such problems. Do not ignore anything you find wrong with your bill. If you are not able to pay your bill, call immediately and try to reach a resolution with the bank.
PURCHASING A CAR

If your parents have not provided you with a car before your 18th birthday, you are now able to purchase one on your own. The rules of credit stated above apply to purchasing a car, that is, whether someone will loan you the money to buy a car depends upon your credit history, income, etc.

It would be wise to take a person along with you who has purchased a car to help you. Please do not be pressured to buy a car because you meet a very good and aggressive sales person. Think about the car you need, not the car you want, and never pay the price listed on the car.

What happens if I change my mind or something goes wrong with the car after I buy it?
Most states have a “back out” provision that allows you to void a contract within a very short period, usually 3 days. The federal law allows you three days to back out if you change your mind. Also, all new cars and some used cars come with a warranty which guarantees repair of the car if something goes wrong within the warranty period. Some used cars are sold on an “as is” basis, meaning you take your chances with the car.

Most states have what is called a “lemon law”. That law provides that if something goes wrong with the car within the warranty period (or sometimes the shorter period of a year) and the efforts to repair it fail, you may be entitled to have the car replaced, or you can give the car back and get your money returned to you. You should call your State Motor Vehicle Commission and see what your rights are and contact an attorney to assist you in getting the car replaced or your money returned. If your state does not have not such a Commission, you should contact the Attorney General of your state.
PROPERTY

At age 18, it is not likely you will be purchasing a home. It is more likely you will be moving into a house or an apartment, renting it as a tenant. To rent property, you enter into a lease which may be in writing or by oral agreement. If the lease lasts for more than one year, it must be in writing to be enforceable. The person who owns the property is called the “landlord” or the “lessor”. The person who rents the property is called a “tenant” or a “lessee”. The lease contains the information describing the property, your name, the landlord’s name, how much the rent will be and whether you must pay a security deposit before moving in. The security deposit is the landlord’s way of obtaining money to repair any damage you may have caused to the property once you are no longer living there.

What should you do before signing a lease?

- Read it from start to finish.
- Make sure you understand it.
- Do not sign it until all blanks in it are filled in or crossed out.
- Inspect the house or apartment and make sure it is in top condition before you move in.
- Take pictures of it before you move in so that you can later show the condition of the premises when you moved in.
- Come to an agreement in writing with the landlord as to what repairs will be made before you move in.
RENTER’S INSURANCE
The first thing you should do before you move in is buy renter’s insurance. The landlord has insurance which will reimburse him for damages to HIS property, that is, the building. However, the contents of your apartment are not covered by that policy. To protect you against theft, fire, flood or any other event which destroys your personal property, YOU must get insurance for yourself. Any insurance agent who writes property insurance can help you.

What can the Landlord do if you fail to pay your rent?
You must read your lease and understand when your rent is due. You may have to pay an additional late fee if you are more than three to five days late with your rent. The landlord may go to court and get you removed from the premises if you fail to pay your rent. But, again, you should read your lease and make sure you did not sign a lease that allows the landlord to remove you without going to court first. The landlord can sue you for the amount left due on your lease. For instance, if you sign a 12 month lease and fail to pay in the 5th month, you are still responsible for the last 7 months of the lease if the landlord fails to rent the property within that time.

Lastly, the landlord can report you to the credit bureau and it will remain on your credit report until it is paid. This will affect your credit rating and your ability to obtain further leases or future credit.

When can you lawfully withhold rent?
Generally, you are required to make a written demand for repairs to your landlord. This provides you with proof should you need it later. You should give the landlord notice of the needed repairs and state that if the repairs are not made within a stated time (usually 14 days) then the lease will end in 30 days. One month is the usual notice time you should give the landlord of your intent to move.

If the landlord does not make the repairs, and the property is unfit to live in or causes you a health threat, you may require him to make the repairs immediately and if he does not, you may move out immediately and end the lease. Health risks may be something like gas leaks, rat infestation, unworkable toilets, etc.
What privacy rights do you have in your apartment?
As a rule, the landlord may only enter your apartment or house after giving you reasonable notice. Further, he should enter only at a reasonable hour. However, in the case of an emergency, he may enter without your permission. For instance, if there is a gas leak and a repairman must determine where the leak is coming from, or there is a fire or some real emergency, he may enter without giving notice.

What happens when your lease expires?
Normally, a written lease is for a specified term, like 6 months or twelve months. It can begin on any day of the month. Usually a month means the entire month so that it will start on the 1st day. However, unless the landlord says otherwise, your lease runs thirty days from the day you move in. For example, you move in on the 8th. Your lease runs from the 8th to the 7th of the next month. If your landlord says you only have to pay a partial month’s rent for the first month, then he is saying your lease runs from the first day of the month.

If you intend to move at the end of the lease, then you must give notice 30 days before the end of that lease. Example: You sign a year-long lease on January 1st. Your lease will be up December 31st. You must have the notice in the landlord’s hands by November 30th.

If you continue to live in your house or apartment after December 31st and your landlord agrees, then you are on a month-to-month lease. You must still give notice 30 days before you intend to leave. You are free however, to sign another year’s lease.
**Getting a Job**

Now that you are 18, you may contract for full-time employment. You may find a job through want ads in your local newspaper, online advertisements, radio announcements or by word of mouth from friends. You may also contact your local employment offices where unemployment benefits are handled. Most jobs do not require a written contract. Some may.

If you are not in a state where most jobs are union jobs, your state is an “Employment-at-will” state. This means you do not have union protection through a union agreement. Therefore, you may be fired with no notice for any lawful reason or no reason at all. You cannot be fired, however, because of your race, age (over 40), sex, handicap, religion, national origin, or color. If you feel you were fired or not hired for one of these reasons, you may contact your local Human Rights Commission or the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and file a complaint.

**Unemployment Benefits**

After you have been employed for a while and are fired or forced to quit through no fault of your own, you may be entitled to unemployment benefits. These benefits are paid for by your employer by payment of an insurance premium into a fund. Contact your local unemployment office to see whether you qualify for these temporary benefits.

**What happens if you are hurt while working?**

Your employer pays another insurance premium for its employees into a fund to pay benefits to a worker injured while on the job. These benefits are called “worker’s compensation benefits”. If you file a claim and your employer objects, you will go before a worker’s compensation official who will decide whether you will be paid while you are away from work, as well as who will pay for your medical expenses.

It is against the law for your employer to attempt to fire you because you file a worker’s compensation claim. You need to seek the assistance of an attorney in any event.
Are there any rights I have as a citizen which can be limited while I am at school?

Yes. The purpose of an educational institution is to provide a safe and relatively stress-free environment so that instruction and learning can occur. Anything you might do that will hinder that goal can be the subject of limitation. Accordingly, your right of free speech can be limited by the school. You may not yell or fight as a matter of freedom of expression, nor could you set afire a book in the hallway as a matter of freedom of speech. Those acts cause safety issues and hinder the school’s ability to deliver a quality education to other students.

Likewise, bringing guns or illegal substances to school cannot be tolerated. Similarly, your right to freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures is limited. Your locker does not “belong” to you such that the school is unable to search it. The car you bring onto school grounds may be subject to search as well.

This is, of course, applicable to public education prior to high school graduation because it is the “government” which is limited in what it can do to affect your rights. If you are in a private school, these rules do not apply. Neither do they apply at the college level as you are considered an “adult”. Unless your particular state has limited your school’s ability to communicate with your parents, the rules of privacy do not protect you against releasing your grades to your parents. On the college level, even though your parents are paying for your education, the school will send your grades to you, not your parents.

Computers have posed an interesting dilemma regarding privacy as well. Generally, a computer is the property of the owner such that what you display on a school-owned computer is subject to discovery by the school officials. Similarly, anything you view on or send to the computer at your job is the property of your employer and is subject to discovery.
The age at which you are treated as an adult for any crime you may commit is a matter of state law. Accordingly, you must consult with a local attorney to fully understand your rights and responsibilities. In general, however, once you reach 18, you are treated as an adult except for a limited number of circumstances. Before you are 18, the authorities may go to court and ask the judge to decide whether you are mature enough to be treated as an adult.

What happens to you for the most part depends upon how the district attorney decides to proceed. He or she has the sole ability to determine how you are treated, what you are charged with, whether bail is recommended, and what recommendations will be made to the sentencing judge about your punishment, if any.

When you reach 18, you may be overwhelmed with this new-found sense of freedom. You should be careful not to fall into the trap of bad behavior as a matter of “just experimenting”. The consequences can be horrible. Experimenting with drugs and alcohol seem to be the two areas most often the subject of criminal behavior of most teens. Possession of drugs and/or alcohol can be felonies, that is, harsh criminal behavior subject to prison time and possible loss of voting rights. Also, employers are often reluctant to hire persons with a criminal record.

Categories
A “misdemeanor” is a crime usually punishable by jail time of less than one year. “Felonies” are those punishable by prison time greater than 1 year. It is NOT the amount of time the judge actually gives you that determines whether a crime is a felony or a misdemeanor. It is the “possible” amount of time that could be imposed that controls.

What you should do if arrested?
If you are arrested, the first thing you should do is be respectful, even in this difficult and emotional circumstance. The second thing you should do is wait to hear your “Miranda Rights” read to you. You have seen enough police shows on television to know that the statement begins with “You have the right to remain silent...........have the right to an attorney....” You should call your parents immediately and have them get a lawyer to meet you as soon as you are arrested. Be sure to follow the attorney’s instructions. Remember if you answer any questions after being read your rights, those statements can be used against you later.
You are presumed innocent until proven guilty. You have a right to a trial by jury. How many people serve on the jury depends upon the law of your state. In all cases, if you are charged with a felony, the jury will be a 12 person panel. Some states provide for misdemeanor trials to be conducted with as few as 6 jurors.

**Remember your parents.**

It is natural to want to hide being arrested from your parents. This is true especially when you enter college, but it is not wise to believe you can handle something this serious with the help of a friend. You should call your parents immediately so they may assist you in paying for an attorney to help you.

**Do I have to consent to a search?**

Yes and no. Generally, if the police have no warrant for a search of your home or your car, they cannot search without your permission. However, there are exceptions to this, such as in emergency situations or occasions where the police may have observed questionable behavior. For instance, if the police are chasing you and you enter a building, they may be able to search without a warrant. Similarly, if they think you can destroy evidence within your immediate control, they may be able to search without a warrant. Consult your attorney to determine whether the police have followed the rules correctly.

**Do I have to know I am committing a crime to be arrested for my behavior?**

No. Ignorance of the law is not a defense to criminal charges. There are some crimes which require you to “mean to do” what you did. This is controlling whether you are convicted. However, your state of mind does not control whether you are arrested and charged but it does affect whether you are ultimately convicted. For example, it is a crime to distribute drugs. You have a prescription for a narcotic to control seizures. You give or sell a pill to a friend. You do not mean to distribute illegal drugs. However, you just gave a controlled substance to a friend. This may be a defense when you are charged, but it will not prevent you from being charged if the district attorney decides to charge you. In general, you should think about what you are doing at all times and try to stay “out of the system” of criminal justice.
What if I am required to do something while pledging for a Sorority or Fraternity?
The desire to join a club is a powerful force which may lead you to do certain things you know are not right. It is not worth going to jail, losing your right to vote or being expelled from school just to belong to a club. Hazing is a crime. Be careful not to promote alcohol consumption, sexual conduct, or “beating or paddling” of another student who is pledging to join a club.

KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONSENSUAL AND NON-CONSENSUAL SEX
Now that you can be charged as an adult, you must be mindful of the consequences of sexual activities you may think are harmless. Understand the meaning of the word “no”. Thinking you MUST have sex at any moment should never be the case. Having sex is not a matter of life or death. It can wait until later.

But having sex can be a matter of life or death if you pursue sex when the other person is not ready. No means no. And no can come after “yes”. Whenever you hear no you must STOP. Life sentences or what may seem like life sentences can be imposed if you insist upon having sex with someone who has said no. This applies no matter who the other person is.

You may be charged with simple assault, or you may be charged assault and battery. Sometimes you may be charged with rape. Remember, the crime you are charged with is a matter totally left up to the district attorney in your city or county. Sex crimes are not limited to what you think a sex act is. It includes things other than sexual penetration. It may include improper touching with your hands or foreign objects.

Remember, just because you want to do something does not mean you must. What you think is harmless may land you in jail. A great conversation with your parents or a counselor may be helpful in keeping you from facing criminal charges for something you can put off until marriage.

What if I am 18 but my partner is not?
The age of consent in most states is 16. If you are 18 but your partner is not, you may be charged and convicted of what is called “statutory rape”. This means that a person, usually a girl, cannot consent to sex before she reaches the age of 16. Be careful. You may be involved with someone who may land you in jail. Remember the law does not allow her to say yes.
The age at which you can drive a car is a matter of state law and it varies from state to state. At one time, 16 was the age at which most states would issue a driver’s license. Nowadays, that has shifted to age 18. In any event, when you are 18, you are considered an adult for purposes of driving and the responsibilities that go along with having a license.

If you are in a car accident, you will now be liable if the accident is determined to be your fault. Prior to reaching age 18, it was the responsibility of your parents. Once you are 18, you can be sued and be held liable for a judgment of money for the damages or injuries you caused to the other person or their vehicle. You can be the sole owner of the car, therefore, be the sole person who is responsible for anything that happens as a result of your driving. You can be equally responsible even if the car you are driving is not yours.

With the purchase of a car comes the responsibility to keep the registration handy and current. Most people keep the registration, which proves you are the owner, in their glove box. Equally as important is the requirement that you keep current insurance on the car. The law requires this if you are stopped by a police officer or highway patrolman, you will have to show proof of insurance. Driving a car while you are not insured can lead to a ticket at a minimum and could lead to criminal charges in some cases.

It goes without saying you should not drink nor take drugs and drive. Additionally, you should not text while driving. Some states make it unlawful to do anything while driving that may distract you or otherwise affect your ability to stay focused on driving. This may include putting on makeup, eating, or using a cell phone for calling or texting.

**DO NOT DRIVE WHILE DRUNK.**

If you have been drinking, it is wise to let a friend drive you home or leave your car and take a cab home. Don’t decide you can “talk your way home” while driving after drinking.
Now that you are an adult, you are entitled to leave your property to whomever you choose through a will or a trust. All property you own is included, such as a car, your clothing, your jewelry, your house if you own one, and your money whether in a bank or in a savings bond or wherever you have placed it. You may also include any pets you have. You may also decide who should get custody of your minor children in the event of your death.

**What happens to your possessions if you have no will?**

Exactly who gets what is a matter of the law of the state where you live. In some states, your parents will inherit your possessions if you have no will and are not married. In some states, your spouse gets all or at least a third of your possessions depending upon how many children you have. If you wish for the things you own to be given to someone in particular, you should seek the advice of a lawyer and make a will or set up a trust.

**What is a Living Will?**

A living will is a document that says what kind of medical care you wish to receive in the event you become ill or are involved in an accident and are unable to voice your wishes. A document called “An Advanced Directive” or a “Living Will” can be written for you by an attorney stating your wishes. This will keep your parents, or spouse or loved ones from guessing what your wishes would be. It also relieves them from the agony of making a life or death decision. You can get forms from your local Bar Association or from most hospitals at no charge to you.
CONCLUSION

Once you reach age 18 and are considered an adult, you will have many rights and responsibilities that were once left to your parents. The information in this pamphlet is not intended to be nor is it a substitute for legal advice. It is simply our way of letting you know things will be different for you now. You are encouraged to be a responsible adult, use common sense and seek the advice of a lawyer when the time arises.

The law changes as your state legislatures make new laws each year and your United States Congress does the same. Please consult your local bar association for a reference to available lawyers. A list of local websites is included in the appendix hereto.

Good luck and please consider the law as a vocation as you enter your college studies.
How the Law Treats You Differently When You Turn 18

Helpful Links

The Age of Majority in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia: http://youngadults.about.com.

State Bar Associations

Alabama www.alabar.org
Alaska www.alaskabar.org
Arizona www.azbar.org
Arkansas www.arkbar.com
California www.calbar.ca.gov
Colorado www.cobar.org
Connecticut www.ctbar.org
Delaware www.dsba.org
Florida www.flabar.org
Georgia www.gabar.org
Hawaii www.hsba.org
Idaho www.isb.idaho.gov
Iowa www.iabar.net
Illinois www.isba.org
Indiana www.inbar.org
Kansas www.ksbar.org
Kentucky www.kybar.org
Louisiana www.lsba.org
Maine www.mainebar.org
Maryland www.msba.org
Massachusetts www.massbar.org
Michigan www.michbar.org
Minnesota www.mnbar.org
Mississippi www.msbar.org
Missouri www.mobar.org
Montana www.montanabar.org
Nebraska www.nebar.com
Nevada www.nvbar.org
New Hampshire www.nhbar.org
New Jersey www.njsba.com
New Mexico www.nmbar.org
New York www.nysba.org
North Carolina www.ncbar.gov
North Dakota www.ndbar.org
Oklahoma www.okbar.org
Oregon www.osbar.org
Ohio www.ohiobar.org
Pennsylvania www.pabar.org
Rhode Island www.ribar.com
South Carolina www.scbar.org
South Dakota www.sdbar.org
Tennessee www.tba.org
Texas www.texasbar.com
Utah www.utahbar.org
Vermont www.vtbar.org
Virginia www.vba.org
Washington www.wsba.org
Wyoming www.wyomingbar.org
West Virginia www.wvbar.org
Wisconsin www.wisbar.org
Washington, D.C. www.dcbar.org
American Samoa www.asbar.org
Guam www.guambar.org
Northern Mariana Is. www.cnmbar.net
Panama Canal Zone www.cnapanama.com
Puerto Rico www.prba.net
Virgin Islands www.vibar.org
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Lawrence Hinkle, Chair, Los Angeles, California
J. Robert Carr, Executive Director, Washington, D.C.
Sharon Bridges, Vice President, Jackson, Mississippi
Rozenia Cummings, Member At Large, Walnut Creek, California
Rhonda Andrew, San Francisco, California
Anton Dyer, Tallahassee, Florida
Yolanda Jackson, San Francisco, California
Christopher M. O’Neal, Tallahassee, Florida
Eleanor Darden Thompson, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma