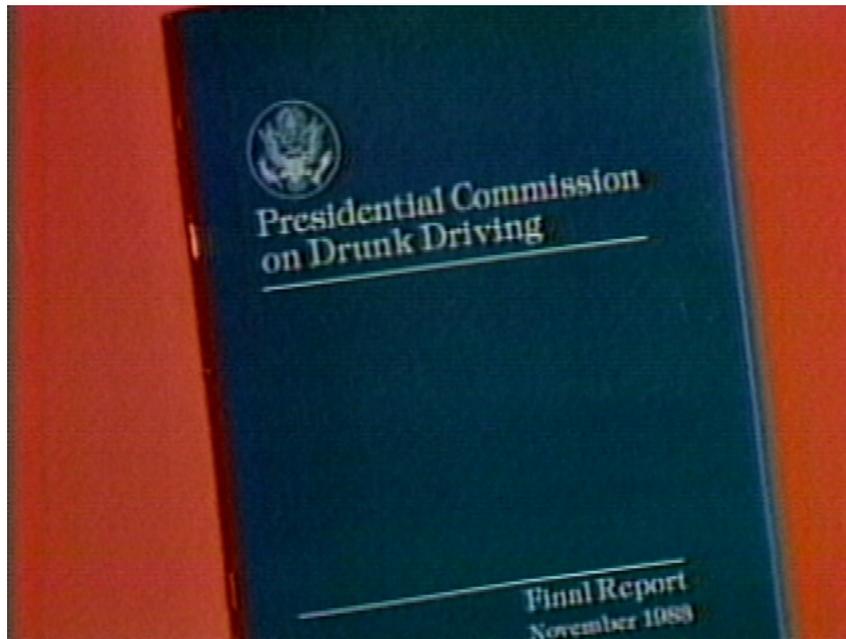


Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving Calls for National Drinking Age

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General Information

Source:	NBC Nightly News	Resource Type:	Video News Report
Creator:	Tom Brokaw/Robert Hager	Copyright:	NBCUniversal Media, LLC.
Event Date:	12/13/1983	Copyright Date:	1983
Air/Publish Date:	12/13/1983	Clip Length	00:02:56

Description

President Ronald Reagan's Commission on Drunk Driving calls for all states to raise their drinking ages to 21 and mandates tough penalties for drunk drivers. The commission also recommends that the federal government withhold millions of dollars in highway funds from states that refuse, a provision which Congress would have to pass and Reagan says he does not support.

Keywords

Presidential, Commission, Drunk, Intoxicated, Impaired, Driving, President, Ronald Reagan, Executive Order, State, Governments, Federal, Government, Funds, Highway Funds, Budgets, Interest Groups, Drinking Age, Congress, Oversight, Recommendations, Underage, Minors, Drinking, Bureaucracy, Media, White House, Deputy Press Secretary, Larry Speakes, Ceremony, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, MADD, Lobbying, Public Opinion, Enforcement, David Durenberger, Candy Lightner, John Volpe,

Citation

MLA

"Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving Calls for National Drinking Age." Robert Hager, correspondent. *NBC Nightly News*. NBCUniversal Media. 13 Dec. 1983. *NBC Learn*. Web. 19 August 2017

APA

Hager, R. (Reporter), & Brokaw, T. (Anchor). 1983, December 13. Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving Calls for National Drinking Age. [Television series episode]. *NBC Nightly News*. Retrieved from <https://archives.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/browse/?cuecard=6437>

CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

"Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving Calls for National Drinking Age" *NBC Nightly News*, New York, NY: NBC Universal, 12/13/1983. Accessed Sat Aug 19 2017 from NBC Learn: <https://archives.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/browse/?cuecard=6437>

Transcript

Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving Calls for National Drinking Age

TOM BROKAW, anchor:

This is the season when the national campaign against drunk drivers takes on special urgency. And tonight President Reagan is considering a series of stiff recommendations from a commission he appointed to study the problem. As Robert Hager reports tonight, the commission says that 21 should be the minimum drinking age in all states.

ROBERT HAGER, reporting:

At a candlelight vigil in Los Angeles last night, names of the victims of drunk drivers were read.

Unidentified Woman: John Yulgucci, Johnny Dunn, Marcus Phillips...

HAGER: 22 thousand Americans are killed each year in alcohol related accidents. On weekend nights 1 of every 10 drivers on the road may be legally drunk. In Washington DC police say they will set up road blocks through this Christmas season and spot check everyone who drives through for signs of intoxication. And today in a ceremony with President Reagan, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Price who lost 2 children in separate accidents to drunk drivers, were specially invited guests as the chairmen of the presidents commission on drunken driving handed over the groups work.

COMMISSION MEMBER: And I'm very happy to present you with this, our final report.

HAGER: The report was tougher than expected. Not only does it call for all states to raise the drinking age to 21, but it calls on the federal government to withhold millions of dollars in highway funds from

states that don't. That would require congressional approval, which would be tough to get. And no sooner did President Reagan have the report in hand, than his spokesman told reporters that the president doesn't support cutting off highway funds. The commission also recommended tough penalties, for first offenders, mandatory fines, mandatory loss of drivers license for 3 months and mandatory 100 days of community service, or 48 hours in jail. All this and the commission also recommended no plea-bargaining with anyone charged with driving while intoxicated. If President Reagan was apposed of the cut off highway funds, he was generally supportive of the overall work.

President RONALD REAGAN: A drunk or drugged person behind the wheel of an automobile as the driver, he or she is a machine for destruction. Today drunk driving isn't a bad habit to be excused; it is a crime to be stopped.

HAGER: Candy Lightner, founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) wasn't upset about the president's partial opposition.

Ms. CANDY LIGHTNER, MADD Founder: Well, we'll continue on whether or not the White House supports this particular recommendation or not, we'll continue working with it on a national level and on state by state level.

HAGER: And Senator David Durenburger predicted the states and congress are ready to move.

Senator DAVID DURENBURGER (R – Minnesota): I think the mood of the country today is highly in favor of some enforcement and its appropriate that the states do it, and I think we ought to be in a position to pass a bill that will withhold funds if they don't.

HAGER: And with preliminary statistics showing fewer debts in states that have already cracked down, there are predictions which some of the states will eventually call reality. Robert Hager, NBC News, Washington.