

Are Public Curfews Fair?

Should teens be allowed to stay out, or forced to go home?

Do your parents give you a *curfew*--a time you have to be in at night? Or do town officials make that call for them?

People are debating public curfews in and out of court. The U.S. Supreme Court has avoided it so far. But it might not be able to for much longer.

Whom do curfews affect? And what do curfew laws say? What happens to teens who violate them?

Curfews apply to *minors* (anyone under 18). The laws vary. Most curfews are 10 p.m. during the week and 12 midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Police often question teens who are out past curfew. Those who have broken the curfew are taken home or to the police station. From there, teens may call their parents.

Some minors receive fines of up to \$500 for repeat offenses. Others may have to do work for their community.

Does that seem fair? Read the arguments below. Then decide.

Yes! Public Curfews Are Fair!

Cities and towns should have curfews. "[A curfew] allows less time to get in trouble with gangs, alcohol, drugs, and things like that," said one teen.

Curfews lower the number of teens involved in crimes. From 1995 to 1999, the number of minors arrested for violent crimes dropped 23 percent. Experts credit public curfews for the drop in crime.

Curfews don't take away teens' rights. Minors don't have the same rights as adults. If a movie theater can keep minors out of R-rated movies, why can't a law keep minors from staying out late?

Curfews help parents and teens. Some teens don't listen to their parents. Public curfews give parents some extra help. They make sure teens are back at home by a certain time.

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Non-fiction: Are Public Curfews Fair?

No! Public Curfews Aren't Fair!

Cities and towns should not have curfews. "It is unfair to punish good kids who are out trying to make something of themselves when only a small percentage of young people are committing crimes," said one parent.

Curfews don't lower teen crime. Studies of curfews in Tulsa, Oklahoma, showed that arrests rose despite the curfew law. Curfews don't stop teens from getting into trouble. Teens who want to commit a crime won't let a curfew stop them.

Our country is based on freedom. Curfews violate a minor's rights. The First Amendment gives all people the right to gather in groups. Shouldn't that law apply to minors also?

Parents are responsible for their underage children. It's not the law's place to be another parent. It's up to parents to choose a curfew.