



**NATIONAL LOCAL
ADVOCACY ALLIANCE**

Raising the Legal Age to Purchase Tobacco Products

Background

The current minimum legal age to purchase tobacco products in most states is 18 or 19 years old. To date, six states set a minimum age to purchase tobacco at 21-years-old in an effort to reduce youth usage of tobacco products.

Arguments Against Raising the Legal Age for Tobacco Purchases

According to tobacco retailer compliance inspection statistics from the FDA, retailers have achieved significantly high passing rates in undercover sting operations.

- Specifically, the results of the FDA compliance checks show that retailers pass compliance checks and undercover operations and do not sell tobacco to underage persons more than 90 percent of the time.

Raising the legal age to 21 to purchase tobacco products will not solve the problem of reducing underage youth access to tobacco product products.

- The long-term Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH) study sponsored by the FDA confirms that 86 percent of minors rely on social sources (older siblings, friends, parents, and even strangers) to acquire cigarettes and other tobacco products.

Raising the age to purchase tobacco products restricts the right of legal adults to make choices for themselves.

- At age 18, adults can enter into legal contracts, sue or be sued, vote, join the military and go to war, take out large loans to pay for college, get married or divorced, have children, and even be charged as adults for committing crimes. Purchasing tobacco products should be on that list.

Law enforcement has greater priorities, such as violent crime and property crimes. Attempting to enforce laws that will be disrespected by young adults can lead to selective enforcement, which can increase tensions between police and various communities.

- While most legislation targets the sale of products to individuals under age 21, many fail to include possession and use of tobacco products in legislative proposals.
- When young adult consumers can visit other jurisdictions to make legal purchases, buy online, or purchase from illicit markets, local legislation only punishes local, taxpaying retailers, while further complicating enforcement.

Conclusion

Prohibiting young adults from purchasing tobacco products results in severely reduced tax revenue as governments routinely struggle to secure necessary funds for essential activities. Raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products is unnecessary and only encourages young consumers to seek other ways to acquire tobacco products. These young adults should have the right to purchase tobacco products legally.

Information Source: The National Association of Tobacco Outlets, Inc.

www.nationallocaladvocacyalliance.org