

E-cigarettes now banned indoors in N.Y.

New law 'clears the air' of confusion

BY DANIELLE AGOLIA

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Gov. Andrew Cuomo has signed a bill putting electronic cigarettes into the same class as traditional tobacco cigarettes. On Oct. 23, Cuomo signed the legislation which includes e-cigarettes and vaping devices in the Clean Indoor Air Act, which bans them in public spaces where tobacco products are prohibited. The legislation was passed overwhelmingly by both the State Assembly and Senate in June.

"These products are marketed as a healthier alternative to cigarettes but the reality is they also carry long-term risks to the health of users and those around them," Cuomo said in a press release. "This measure closes another dangerous loophole in the law, creating a stronger, healthier N.Y. for all."

Sixth District Republican Senator Kemp Hannon was the lead sponsor on the bill. "It was something relayed to me by a fair number of people," he said. "I think it's a balance between individual rights and collective rights." He noted the people can still use e-cigarettes, but now people in restaurants or workplaces will not be disturbed by the vapor.

Cuomo signed legislation in July that banned the use of e-cigarettes on school grounds, and many N.Y. counties, including Suffolk, have already banned the use of e-cigarettes in public places. This legislation will now make the law consistent across the state.

According to the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island, e-cigarettes are marketed as a "healthier alternative" to traditional cigarettes, but the vapor generated contains nicotine and other toxins. A study performed by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in February also found high levels of five toxic metals—cadmium, chromium, lead, manganese and nickel—in the liquid in e-cigarettes.

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Assemblyman Michael Montesano, a Glen Head Republican, believes this is an effective piece of legislation. "This was an unregulated issue, and while we can't regulate those who use these devices, we shouldn't subject secondhand smoke to other people, especially children, in confined spaces," he said.

Montesano was also concerned about the unknown origins of the ingredients used in different vape and smoke flavors. "You go into any local smoke shop, and there are hundreds and hundreds of different varieties to choose from," he said. "Nobody knows where these ingredients come from, or the potential harms they may carry."

Joanna Commander, an advisor to the North Shore Coalition Against Substance Abuse, said this was a "positive move" that would help combat the culture of acceptance surrounding e-cigarettes and vaping devices.

"The problem with these devices is that they're marketed as a safer and better alternatives to cigarettes," she said. "The law will not only help control the behavior of e-cigarette users, but also those exposed to the smoke vapors they give off."

Carol Meschkow, Nassau Project Coordinator for the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island, works with municipalities including S.A.F.E. in Glen Cove to provide free educational resources and establish tobacco-free policies.

"After all of the things that we've been working towards, we've hit stumbling blocks with e-cigs with the kids," said Meschkow.

For almost a decade, the TAC has been working with S.A.F.E. with a focus on educating the youth in Glen Cove on the dangers of tobacco. Together they have implemented entryway smoking bans by the Glen Cove Library and a reduction in store marketing.

"Any piece of legislation that's passed is a grassroots movement," Meschkow said. "For these kids who don't want to be the replacement smokers, they've been heard with the inclusion of the Clean Indoor Air Act. Since our youth are the primary initi-

One of the things that is troubling is that the metals in e-cigarette coils, which heat the liquid that creates the aerosol, are toxic when inhaled.

DR. ANA MARIA RULE

Assistant scientist
Johns Hopkins

Sharon Harris, executive director of S.A.F.E., said the recent exposure of youths to vaping has put an emphasis on their collaborative efforts to educate youth on the importance of not falling into this habit. "For us, youth that have not only gotten the message but have shared it with their peers and respective adults has been a great sense of satisfaction, knowing that our youth feel that they have been heard with the passage of this legislation."

Alyssa Seidman contributed to this story.