

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Legal Sales Age of Tobacco Products Raised

On December 20, 2019, President Trump signed into law a spending bill that among many measures raised the legal sales age for all tobacco products from 18 to 21 years old nationwide. This is a major accomplishment that was built upon the hard work that the American Lung Association led in states and localities, as well as in Washington. According to the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island, the following are some important information about the law and what it means for efforts moving forward.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that Tobacco 21 took effect nationwide when the President signed the bill. There are no exemptions – including for military personnel anywhere in the U.S. or on tribal lands. The legal sales age for all tobacco products nationwide is 21 years old. Further clarification is expected about short term implementation from FDA shortly. Under the law, FDA is required to update regulations and release them by June 17, 2020. This will provide even more clarity and certainty to states.

Enforcement of legal sales age requirements will continue to be handled on the local and state levels, and in conjunction with the FDA. The law does not add any new penalties for youth purchase, use or possession (PUP) of tobacco products, however it does not override any current state or local youth PUP laws. Federal enforcement efforts will continue to be focused on compliance with the federal age of sale, as well as other provisions of the Tobacco Control Act.

FDA has contracts with states and local governments to implement minimum age compliance and inspection programs. There are also federal requirements for states to enforce the minimum age laws under what is known as the Synar amendment. States that don't comply with this new federal minimum age of sale risk losing substance abuse grant funds. The rules and contracts that implement these programs still need to be updated. Once fully implemented, it is expected that states and localities will enforce Tobacco 21 the way that they enforced their prior 18 or 19-year-old tobacco sales age.

State and localities may continue to pass laws to increase the age of sale to 21 and/or to bolster enforcement of the law, but there is no requirement to do so and such measures may be counterproductive.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is a federal agency of the United States Department of Health and Human Services responsible for protecting and promoting public health. For more information please visit www.fda.gov.

For more information about vaping please visit the Vaping Facts and Myths page of SAFE's website at www.safeglencove.org or learn about the Coalition please follow them on: www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition.

To learn more about the harmful effects of tobacco visit: www.tobaccofreenys.org
or for help with quitting contact the State's Quitline at: 1-866-NY-QUITS.