

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2026

CONTACT: Dr. Sharon Harris 516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Britain's Proposed Lifetime Smoking Ban to Become Law – US Implications

Recently, a proposal was approved by Parliament to ban the supply or sale of tobacco products to anyone born in 2009 or after, permanently with the intention of raising a “smoke-free generation”. This applies to people currently 17 years old or younger and aims to keep them from ever picking up the habit in their lifetime. The proposal is expected to soon go into law after the final formality of approval by King Charles III.

In 2024, Britain's Office for National Statistics reported that 5.3 million people aged 18 or over were smokers, accounting for more than 10 percent of adults in the United Kingdom (UK). Smoking is responsible for 64,000 deaths every year in Britain, making it the leading preventable cause of death, disability and ill health in the country, according to the Department of Health and Social Care.

In total, smoking costs Britain nearly \$29 billion annually, including through lost productivity and health care costs, according to the government. Smoking also has socioeconomic effects and exacerbates health inequalities, the health department said, noting that 500,000 households are “living in poverty” because of tobacco expenditures.

A 2024 report on adult smoking habits in Britain by the Office for National Statistics showed that three-quarters of smokers wished they had never started smoking and the majority wanted to quit. Citing those statistics, the health department, in an assessment of the generational ban bill, said, “Addiction is not a choice.”

Lawmakers say that in practice, the measure means the age of sale for tobacco products will rise over time as the targeted demographic group grows older and could lead to a smoke-free society. The law will apply in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The legislation includes new licensing and registration requirements for retailers and adds product information mandates, advertising and promotion controls, and further restrictions on smoking and vaping in public places. It hopes to block the use of tobacco products, describing them as “the main underlying drivers of ill-health,” and to reduce the pressure on Britain's publicly funded health care system from smoking-related illnesses.

The UK's current legal smoking age is 18. Under the new law, it rises by one year annually. Those born after 2008 are permanently locked out of the legal tobacco market, regardless of their age at the time of purchase. For example, a 25-year-old born in 2009 won't be able to buy cigarettes in 2034. The same goes for a 50-year-old in 2059.

The bill does not ban smoking itself, nor does it criminalize possession. Cigarettes won't be confiscated from those who already smoke. The intervention is at the point of sale: retailers must verify birth dates. The bill also grants new regulatory powers over vaping products including controls on flavors and packaging. These are popular among youth in both the UK and the US.

New Zealand passed a similar Smokefree Environment amendment in 2022 but their incoming government repealed it in 2023 before it was implemented.

The US has never enacted a nationwide federal smoking ban in workplaces or public places. Policies are set through state and local laws and ordinances. Thirteen states and Washington, D.C., have comprehensive smoke-free workplace protections, while 12 have no general statewide smoking restrictions at all.

At the federal level, the US has been moving away restrictions on tobacco products. In January 2025, the FDA withdrew its proposed rules to ban menthol and flavored cigars. This effectively shelved what would have been one of the most consequential tobacco actions in American history.

According to the American Lung Association's (ALA) *State of Tobacco Control 2026* report, 2025 marked the 13th consecutive year in which no state passed a comprehensive smokefree law. Thirty-five states received F grades on tobacco tax policy.

America already has local versions of the UK Smoking Ban. The town of Brookline, Massachusetts, passed a 2020 bylaw prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 2000. This was the first ordinance of its kind in the US. The Massachusetts Supreme Court upheld it in 2024. By March 2026, 22 Massachusetts communities had adopted similar "Nicotine Free Generation" regulations, covering more than 632,000 residents.

Some prevention researchers perceive this action as a bottom-up public health strategy where communities act without waiting for state or federal movement offers a fragmented but real model of how such policies might spread in the US. They maintain that it is unlikely that the US will pass its own version of the UK Smoking Ban at the federal level as the Trump administration has moved to deregulate, not expand, federal health authorities and the will to curb Big Tobacco is *De minimis*.

Additionally, the UK has a single-payer health system with a direct institutional interest in reducing preventable illness costs. Every smoker who avoids lung cancer or heart disease is a fiscal win for the NHS. In the US, health costs are diffused across insurers, employers, Medicaid and Medicare, complicating the politics of who wins financially from tobacco control.

Ultimately, the path toward generational smoking bans like the UK's will be incremental and led by local communities and states, using Massachusetts as an example.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned with all combustible and electronic products with tobacco. The Agency employs environmental strategies to educate and update the community regarding the negative consequences of smoking and vaping. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or to learn

more about electronic products visit the Youth and Tobacco Use and Vaping Facts and Myths Pages of SAFE's website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health at www.safeglencove.org.