

TOBACCO 21



Fighting back against youth smoking and addiction

Less Smoking

By raising the minimum legal sale age for tobacco to 21, smoking rates can be lowered as younger smokers (18-20) will be barred from purchasing tobacco and will be less likely to become addicted.

Lower Costs

Smoking in South Carolina results in thousands of deaths and billions of dollars lost every year. When the state adopts a Tobacco 21 policy, we can stop youth smoking before it starts.

The first community T21 law enacted reduced smoking rates by nearly

95%

of adult smokers had their first cigarette before the age of 21

50%

The Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control found that over

70%

of Americans support T21

Five states and over

310

local governments nationwide have T21 policies

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Why raise the age for tobacco?

Tobacco 21 seeks to address a central issue behind smoking – that nearly all adult smokers had their first cigarette before the age of 21 (95%). Put simply, when the minimum legal sales age is raised to 21, it will become far more difficult for young adults (particularly <18) to access and get addicted to tobacco. As many young adults get their hands on tobacco through of-age friends and acquaintances, the age increase will work to limit their access to tobacco. Young people who have not used tobacco by 21 are unlikely to ever start – adopting a tobacco 21 law can help make that a reality.

How it works:

In the state of South Carolina local governments are prevented from passing local tobacco 21 laws by a legal measure known as preemption. While preemption prohibits local governments from passing laws stronger than the state law, cities and towns can still pass resolutions in favor of a law raising the minimum sales age to 21. These resolutions lack an immediate impact; however, they can help bring the attention of the state government to the massive savings to be had in both money and lives from raise the minimum legal sale age for tobacco to 21.

What's at stake:

Tobacco use has tremendous human and fiscal costs for the citizens of South Carolina:

- 7,200 adults die from their own smoking
- more than 200,000 adults suffer from tobacco related diseases
- over \$4.2 billion in health care costs and smoking-caused productivity losses

To save both lives and money, we need to prevent tobacco use before it starts with a statewide Tobacco 21 law.

Sources:

- <https://countertobacco.org/policy/tobacco-21/>
- <http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2018/02/05/tobaccocontrol-2017-054088>
- <http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/25/3/284>
- <https://tobacco21.org/>

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