

Canton, Mass., Raises Tobacco, E-Cig Purchase Age to 21

CANTON, Mass. -- In a high-profile case, the Board of Health in Canton, Mass., voted Monday to raise the age for purchasing tobacco products to 21 from 18, and banned "nonmedical nicotine-delivery products", reported *The Boston Globe*. This includes dissolvable nicotine tablets and snus; however, the board backed away from a proposal to ban electronic cigarettes.

The board exempted e-cigarettes and nicotine patches from the new regulations, but the age to purchase these items also was raised to 21 from 18.

All of the regulations were approved unanimously as part of one package and take effect Jan. 1, said the report.

Director of public health John Ciccotelli said he believes that e-cigarettes are not an effective quitting aid, but he said that he received hundreds of e-mails and calls pointing to research to the contrary.

"The way the regulation was written it was a bit of an oversight," Ciccotelli told *The Patriot Ledger*. "It was a bit of not really recognizing the role that electronic cigarettes have."

The regulations are intended to cut down on the use of nicotine products by underage users, he said. The regulation also includes a sunset provision that would repeal it after five years if it is proven to be ineffective. The board of health intends to monitor the regulation's effectiveness by surveying students in Canton's public schools.

Some critics say the rules punish innocent, legal-age smokers. Critics from the business community were also opposed to the regulations.

"While this community may decide that they're going to implement this, other communities may not and you create an economic disadvantage for small businesses here in this town," Steve Ryan, executive director of the New England Convenience Store Association, told the *Patriot Ledger*.

To view the full text of the approved regulation, see File Attachments below.