



Home > Press Releases > D.C. City Council Raises Tobacco Sale Age to 21, Makes Baseball Tobacco-Free in Nation's Capital

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Statement of Matthew L. Myers, President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The D.C. City Council today took strong action to combat tobacco use – the nation's No. 1 cause of preventable death – by giving final approval to measures that increase the age of sale for tobacco products to 21, prohibit the use of smokeless tobacco at Nationals Park and other sports venues, and prohibit electronic cigarette use in public and work places. These actions will protect children from tobacco addiction, save lives and help make the next generation tobacco-free. We look forward to Mayor Muriel Bowser signing these measures into law.

Increasing the tobacco age to 21 will reduce tobacco use among youth and young adults – age groups when nearly all tobacco use begins and that are heavily targeted by the tobacco industry. We know that about 95 percent of adult smokers began smoking before they turned 21. The increase in the tobacco age will help counter the industry's efforts to target young people at a critical time when many move from experimenting with tobacco to regular smoking. It will also help keep tobacco out of high schools, where younger teens often obtain tobacco products from older students. A 2015 report by the prestigious Institute of Medicine (now called the National Academy of Medicine) concluded that increasing the tobacco sale age to 21 would yield substantial public health benefits.

By increasing the tobacco age to 21, the nation's capital adds momentum to similar efforts nationwide. To date, so-called "Tobacco 21" laws have been passed by the states of California and Hawaii and more than 200 localities, including New York City, Chicago, Boston, Cleveland and both Kansas Cities.

With its prohibition of smokeless tobacco – like chew, dip and snuff – at all organized sports facilities within the city, Washington, D.C., joins the growing ranks of tobacco-free baseball cities. Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco have enacted laws prohibiting tobacco use at sports venues, including their professional baseball stadiums. A statewide law in California will take effect before the 2017 season. Once all of these laws are implemented, 11 of the 30 Major League stadiums will be tobacco-free.

Today's baseball action sends a simple and powerful message to kids: Baseball and tobacco don't mix. Our national pastime should be about promoting a healthy and active lifestyle, not a deadly and addictive product. The vote also provides further momentum for the nationwide campaign to take tobacco out of baseball for the sake of kids, the players and the future of the game.

Tobacco use kills nearly half a million Americans and costs the nation about \$170 billion in health care bills each year. If current trends continue, 5.6 million of today's youth will die prematurely from a smoking-related illness. We applaud D.C. Council members for their leadership in helping end this terrible epidemic.

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