

House passes bill raising smoking age to 21

01:30 a.m. HST, Mar 07,
2015

POSTED:

LAST UPDATED: 02:40 a.m. HST, Mar 07, 2015



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Gordon Chan taking a smoke break.

A bill to ban all sales of cigarettes, tobacco and electronic smoking devices to anyone under 21 years old won approval from the state House of Representatives this week and has moved to the Senate for consideration.

The measure is supported by the state Department of Health, which views the age restriction as a strategy for reducing smoking by young people.

Data from the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General shows 95 percent of adult smokers start smoking before age 21, according to the Health Department.

"Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable disease, disability and death in the United States," the department said in written testimony. "Nationally, nearly 1,000 youth under the age of 18 become regular smokers daily, and almost one-third of them will die from it."

"Tobacco companies heavily target young adults through a variety of marketing activities because they know it is a critical time period for solidifying nicotine addiction," the department added.

The measure is also supported by the Honolulu Police Department, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network and the American Lung Association of the Mountain Pacific.

It is also backed by the American Heart Association, which noted the minimum age to purchase tobacco has already been increased to 21 in Suffolk County, N.Y.; Evanston, Ill.; Englewood, N.J.; New York City; and Hawaii County.

The data on the impact of raising the smoking age is not yet conclusive, but it provides "strong reason to believe that it will contribute to reductions in youth tobacco use," said Donald Weisman, the Hawaii government relations director for the Heart Association.

In the House vote, only state Reps. Bob McDermott (R, Ewa Beach-Iroquois Point) and Takashi Ohno (D, Nuuanu-Li-liha-Alewa Heights) voted against the measure.

McDermott described the bill as an example of what he calls "the mommy state." He served in the U.S. Marine Corps as an enlisted man and an officer, and "when you're out in the field, and you're in harm's way and you want to have a cigarette, by God, you should be allowed to have a cigarette. It's up to them."

"We ask these kids to fight for us and die for us, and tell them they can't have a cigarette?" McDermott asked. "That seems a little schizophrenic to me."

The bill was also opposed by several individuals. Justin Wolery argued in written testimony the bill would restrict the freedom of adults between the ages of 18 and 21 "for no apparent reason."

"Prohibition laws like this have been proven time after time to be ineffective at curtailing the targeted behavior," Wolery wrote.

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1:06

Charles Barkley Calls Out People Upset with...

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(7) Wichita State upsets in-state rival (2) Kansas

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'Lip Sync Battle' Trailer is a Star-Studded Must...

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Massive 14Ft Stingray is Largest Freshwater Fish...

- Up Next

0:40

Adorable jaguar cub set to make public debut



- 1:06

Meet the New 'Daily Show' Host, Trevor Noah



- 1:24

Your Next Party Fave: Edible Shot Glasses?!



- 0:23

Shot of the Game: Curry powers through three...



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Duke Blue Devils Final Four Hype Video

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Emotional Coach K Loves His Final Four Team | Duke...

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Man Saves Boy From Traffic In Washington

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3 numbers with Lex - Heinz/Kraft

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Hilary Duff Explains Why She Changed Her Hair...

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10 Best Fast & Furious Cars

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Intel to Buy Altera

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Notre Dame's Jerian Grant | Top 5 Plays of the...

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Jennifer Lopez Caught Kissing Her Ex Casper...

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Zayn Malik's 1st Interview After Leaving One...

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Raw: Lioness Has Rare Five-cub Litter

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Consumer Confidence Falls Less Than...

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West Virginia fails to back up Dexter Miles Jr.'s...

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Kate Middleton's Last Appearance Before Maternity...

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Katy Perry Really Needs a Nap

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Why Arizona Is A Perfectly Constructed Team

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UNC's Roy Williams Gets Emotional...

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A Marble Paint Twist on Easter Eggs

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Body Cam Shows Rescue of Child From Burning...

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McDonald's Big Mac Fashion: I'm Wearin' It

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Dean Smith leaves \$200 for all of his former lettermen

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The Hoff Goes Totally '80s Complete with...

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Nick Jonas on Zayn Malik Leaving One Direction:...

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North Carolina Will Look To Brice Johnson In...

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Louisville's Rick Pitino Previews Sweet Sixteen...

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LeBron James' 'cousin' looking to get to NCAA...

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Scrabble Chimes for Your Wine Glasses

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Hillary Clinton: I'm All About New Beginnings

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Lions TE Eric Ebron's brilliant gift to Matthew...

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Celine Dion Gets Emotional Over Husband's...

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Jon Hamm Checks Out of Rehab for Alcohol Addiction

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Arizona's Stanley Johnson: West Region's X Factor

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