

Illinois should raise the age to buy tobacco to 21

We thank the Tribune for its recent editorial in support of raising the age to buy tobacco products from 18 to 21. It only makes sense; smoking prevention in the first place is easier than smoking cessation later on.

We know that 90 percent of smokers start before the age of 21. After that, even with medications and the help of physicians and counselors, only about 6 percent of all smokers will quit successfully. At the same time, the Institute of Medicine estimates that raising the purchase age for tobacco products to 21 would reduce the initiation of smoking by 25 percent!

We've already seen local success. Evanston raised the age to purchase all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, to age 21 in October. There was no public opposition to this ordinance, and surveillance checks so far have found 100 percent compliance by local retailers.

It is time for the state of Illinois to follow suit.

— *Dr. Timothy Sanborn, Evanston, chairman-elect, Illinois Advocacy Committee, American Heart Association and American Stroke Association*