

# Increasing the Sale Age for Tobacco Products to 21

## Top Ten Reasons to Support T21 Legislation this Year

1. **Make tobacco use, still the number one cause of preventable disease and death, a priority:** 3,100 Vermont kids still smoke. 25% of Vermont youth use some tobacco product. The National Academies of Medicine<sup>1</sup> found that raising the age to 21 would reduce the smoking rate over time by 12% and reduce smoking-related deaths by 10%.
2. **Reduce the likelihood of addiction:** 95% of adults started smoking by the age of 21, and half of them became regular smokers by their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday<sup>2</sup>. Raising the age would also address the e-cigarette epidemic that is plaguing the country's youth – highlighted recently by the 78% increase in use by high school student, 48% increase by middle school students, and a call to action to states by the U.S. Surgeon General.
3. **Protect developing brains:** Teens and young adults are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine and nicotine addiction (including from e-cigarettes), causing lasting, adverse consequences on brain development<sup>3</sup>. The National Academies of Medicine report<sup>4</sup> emphasizes that the brain continues to develop “until about age 25.”
4. **Reduce social sources of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes:** About half of Vermont e-cigarette users under age 18 borrowed or got them from someone who was over age 18. Nearly one in five bought them either online (10%) or in a store (8%).<sup>5</sup>
5. **Join the U.S. Military:** The Vermont National Guard supports tobacco 21. *“...being a member of the Vermont National Guard requires a level of health and fitness that is potentially impacted by smoking. A member of the National Guard that smokes is no different than a civilian in the fact that smoking can have consequences to long-term health and wellness, which impacts health care cost,”* -Deputy Adjutant General Kenneth W. Gragg Jr. The Department of Defense, the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force have each set goals to become tobacco-free.
6. **Protect teens from harmful substances:** The e-cigarette aerosol that users breathe from the device and exhale can contain harmful and potentially harmful substances, including: nicotine, ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs, flavoring such as diacetyl, a chemical

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Sales Access to Tobacco Products, March 2015

<sup>2</sup> Calculated based on data in the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014, <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/SAMHDA/>;

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Sales Access to Tobacco Products, March 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Vermont Department of Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2017.

linked to a serious lung disease, volatile organic compounds, cancer-causing chemicals, and heavy metals such as nickel, tin, and lead.<sup>6</sup>

7. **Protect young pregnant women and babies:** 29% of pregnant Vermonters between the ages of 18 and 20<sup>7</sup> smoke. Smoking during pregnancy is linked to poor birth outcomes including preterm birth, low birthweight, miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy and increased risk of sudden unexpected infant death.<sup>8</sup>
8. **Help schools protect their students:** *"I fully support and embrace increasing the age requirement for both using and purchasing tobacco products and/or e-cigarettes. Tobacco use among our teens is a growing epidemic; as a principal, I see the usage impacting students in my own elementary school and I implore those making decisions to consider increasing the age requirement to 21."* - Carrie Wilson, Head of School, Bishop John A. Marshall School, Morrisville
9. **Support current research:** *"The 18-year-old purchase age was set decades ago. Since then, research has shown that kids under age 21 become addicted faster than adults and they have a harder time quitting. In addition, adolescents who begin smoking early on are much more likely to fall into addiction on heroin, cocaine and marijuana."* - John Hughes, MD, Professor, UVM, Department of Psychiatry & Psychological Science, Vermont Center on Health and Behavior, Former Chair, Vermont Tobacco Evaluation & Review Board
10. **Join other states that have made T21 a prevention priority:** Thirteen states have passed laws raising the tobacco age to 21 – Virginia, California, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Oregon, Hawaii, Maine, Illinois, Utah, Washington, Arkansas, Maryland and New York (the latter two are awaiting Governors' signatures) -- along with at least 440 localities. Burlington and South Burlington voters passed ballots urging the Governor and state lawmakers to pass legislation increasing the sale age of tobacco to 21.

For more information, contact:

Rebecca Ryan, [rebecca.ryan@lung.org](mailto:rebecca.ryan@lung.org), 802-876-6862

Tina Zuk, [tina.zuk@heart.org](mailto:tina.zuk@heart.org), 802-578-3466

Jennifer Costa, [jennifer.costa@cancer.org](mailto:jennifer.costa@cancer.org); 802-872-6330

Jill Sudhoff-Guerin, [jsudhoffguerin@vtmd.org](mailto:jsudhoffguerin@vtmd.org), 802- 917-5817

Stephanie Winters, [swinters@vtmd.org](mailto:swinters@vtmd.org), 802-223-7898

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<sup>6</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. E-cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Data request response, Vermont Department of Health, Memo, December 31, 2018

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General." Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001