

Tobacco- Youth Smoking

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Tobacco
Youth Smoking

Anti-smoking campaigns help some states kick the habit

By James Pitcher
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Aggressive anti-smoking campaigns in states such as Oregon and California appear to be working, while smoking rates in states with few controls, such as Kentucky, have risen, the federal government said Tuesday.

Kentucky, which produces tobacco, had the highest adult smoking rate in the USA in 1997, 30.8%, according to the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Kentucky's rate rose from 27.8% in 1995. "It's a dose-response relationship — the bigger dose of the drug, in this case, tobacco control, you administer, the more response you get," said CDC director Jeffrey Koplan. He presented new state-by-state smoking figures at the National Conference on Tobacco and Health in Kissimmee, Fla.

The CDC released recommendations on how states should spend anticipated funds from the \$250 billion settlement with tobacco companies, which had been sued over tobacco-related health care costs.

Each state will receive an average of \$41 billion. The CDC recommends states spend from \$31 million to \$83 million on health and anti-smoking programs.

Utah, with its large Mormon population, had the lowest adult smoking rate at 13.7% and the lowest youth rate at 16.4%. Mormons abstain from using tobacco products. Utah has had the lowest rate in each of the last three reports issued by the CDC.

Kentucky's youth smoking rate also is the highest in the country: 47% of students in grades 9-12 say they had smoked in the previous month. Amy Barkley, project manager for the tobacco-control coalition Kentucky Action, said the state has not provided funds for tobacco control. "It's deplorable that we have the highest youth smoking rate, but understandable given our culture," Barkley said.

Two-thirds of Kentucky farms grow tobacco, making it the nation's most tobacco-dependent state, according to the Federal Reserve Bank.

In 1996, Kentucky produced 27% of the country's tobacco, second only to North Carolina at 38%. That state's adult smoking rate was 25.8%, down from 26.0% in 1995.

It is illegal to sell tobacco to minors in Kentucky, but not illegal for minors to use tobacco products.

Danny McKinney, chief executive officer for the Kentucky Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative, said farmers are willing to join the fight against youth smoking, but will not stand for state money being used to combat adult smoking.

"We draw the line when it comes time to spend money to limit adult choice," McKinney said.

In states where excise taxes have gone up and anti-smoking campaigns

have been implemented, smoking rates have declined steadily.

California had the second-lowest adult rate, 18.4%, in 1997 after hitting 26% in 1984.

The drop was attributed to the nation's oldest anti-smoking initiative, which began in 1989.

Oregon's cigarette consumption rate decreased 11.3% from 1996 to 1998 after voters there approved a similar program in 1996.

Fans of gun show display dismay at sales ban

By Carol Morello
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES — To its promoters and fans, the Great Western Gun Show is only peripherally about guns.

Most visitors are so solidly middle class that the U.S. Marines, the Los Angeles Police Department and the county Sheriff's Department all set up recruiting booths. It can sometimes feel like a costume party, where men come dressed in Civil War uniforms or whole families attend in camouflage.

Of the 5,300 display tables that stretch for eight miles, fewer than 10% hold modern guns. The rest display old war medals, gun accessories such as straps and scopes, canteens and beef jerky.

But what's a gun show without guns for sale?

That is what's the country's largest gun show is facing at its big fall event this October because of a law approved Tuesday, on a 3-2 vote, by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. The ordinance, effective just one month before the Great Western Gun Show opens at the county fairgrounds in Pomona, outlaws all gun sales on county property.

It doesn't exclude gun shows from being staged at the fairgrounds, where the Great Western show has operated for 22 years. Vendors can still exhibit their weapons. They just can't put them up for sale or even make arrangements to sell them at a later date.

The prohibition produced

much harrumphing among dozens of gun show aficionados who attended the debate. They said that a gun show where they couldn't buy guns would be no more than a trip around a museum.

The show's promoters are vowing to go to court to overturn the ban. Contracts already have been signed for shows in October and December, two of the four held annually.

"Fewer people will come to the show," predicted Chad Segar, the show's manager.

The debate over gun shows is part of a growing assault on firearms in California.

Politicians have been emboldened to press for stricter gun legislation by the arrests of vendors who sold illegal weapons to undercover agents at

earlier shows, as well as by tragedy. On Aug. 10, a gunman with a history of mental illness wounded five people at a Jewish community center here, then killed a Filipino-American letter carrier.

Last month, the state Legislature enacted a ban on assault weapons and junk handguns. Other handgun purchases are now limited to one a month. Soon, guns must be sold in California with child-safety locks. Now, gun shows are facing increased scrutiny.

"Gun shows are not good or bad," said Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca, who testified in support of the gun-sale ban. "But what we're dealing with is a small portion of vendors who sell illegal weapons. Assault weapons, military weapons,

junk guns — all this stuff has passed through the hands of vendors at gun shows."

Dozens of speakers, however, argued that a ban would penalize visitors who regard gun shows as entertainment.

"I'm not a criminal," said Alwyn Crow, who works in food service at UCLA and has attended the Great Western show for years. "You'll prevent law-abiding citizens from the peaceful assembly and purchase of a legal product from licensed dealers. If you put as much fervor into the capture and prosecution of criminals that you do to the harassment of people who attend gun shows, Los Angeles would be a much better place to live."

► Board approves ban, 1A

Police eager to trade \$ for guns

However, studies have shown that few weapons turned in during expensive 'buy-back' programs are linked to crimes

By Kevin Johnson
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — More than a few heads turned Tuesday when a stocky man cradling a Mac 10 machine pistol climbed the steps to the 4th District Police Headquarters.

But the man and his weapon were just what the cops had been hoping for.

"It's useless to me," said the owner who identified himself only as "Larry" before surrendering the weapon to police in exchange for a crisp \$100 bill. "I would have turned it in for nothing."

It was an extraordinary moment in a dramatic campaign. Local police were offering \$100 for every weapon surrendered to them, regardless of its firepower. No questions asked.

So attractive have been the offers of money and amnesty that police extended the one-day program to a second day Tuesday and were in danger of running out of cash after distributing more than \$225,000.

The program has brought both young men with shotguns and at least one elderly woman. She turned in a holstered .22-caliber handgun wrapped in a kitchen towel.

"These guns had the potential to hurt people," says T.W. Gainer, the district's executive assistant chief. "That potential is no longer there."

Even so, Gainer grudgingly acknowledged Tuesday what critics of similar gun exchanges have been saying for months:

Few of the more than 2,000 weapons turned in over the past two days in Washington, and in several other cities over the years, were Mac 10s or other high-powered weapons so often used in violent crime.

Academics have questioned the cost of such campaigns, vs. funneling the same money to other social causes.

Studies of past "buy-back" campaigns suggest that few of those attracted to offers of money and amnesty in exchange for guns are likely to be criminals.

"Given the high cost and weak theoretical rationale," a Justice Department study found last year, "there seems little reason to invest in further testing of the idea."

The same study, conducted by the University of Maryland, suggested that the \$250,000 that St. Louis invested in its buy-back program in 1994 could have been better put to use to expose about 250 children to anti-drug programs.

So why do police continue to employ the strategy?

At a time when dramatic incidents of gun violence have shaken the country, analysts say buy-back programs are at least a step toward raising the public-safety quotient, if even in a very small way.

"Even if the people who participate in these programs are not at high risk of perpetuating violent crimes, it still gets

guns out of households," says Jon Vernick, associate director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, in Baltimore. "Homes with guns in them are more likely to experience homicide."

Among the people lined up outside the 4th District headquarters Tuesday to dump their weapons, several said they only wanted to purge their households of any potential danger.

"I don't need it. I don't use it. It was something I found a long time ago," says 43-year-old John Brown after surrendering his .22-caliber handgun.

A 67-year-old man who declined to be identified deposited his shotgun in a red milk crate and dusted his hands to signify the "dirty business" was done.

"The thing was lying around the house," he says. "It was time to get rid of it before it hurt somebody."

And Gainer was happy enough to pay all comers, even for weapons that were no longer functional or didn't exactly qualify as guns.

Monday, police were presented a live hand grenade, prompting a call to explosives experts to disarm it.

"If the hand grenade was the only thing we got," Gainer says, "then it was worth \$100,000. It's scary to see what people have had locked up in their houses."

Police said all of the guns would be examined to determine whether any were used in crimes. Analyses completed by late Tuesday had not produced any immediate connections.

"Each one of these guns has a history," Gainer says.

"But now we've altered the course of that history."

CRIME-

GUN BUYBACKS

(and copy OTHER SIDE SEPARATE)