**Tobacco 21 Talking Points**

Tobacco 21 is an initiative which calls on Pennsylvania to raise the minimum legal age of sale for all tobacco products from 18 to 21. Pennsylvania does not currently have Tobacco 21 legislation, leaving Pennsylvania youth vulnerable to nicotine addiction and the adverse health impacts of tobacco use. Currently, Act 112 of 2002 prohibits the sale of tobacco to minors under 18, however in Pennsylvania, youth access laws are preempted, meaning they cannot be stricter then or differ from the state law.

A comprehensive Tobacco 21 law is necessary to protect current and future generations from a lifetime of tobacco related diseases and premature death.

**Model Tobacco 21 Policy:**

* **Inclusion of e-cigarettes** – E-cigarettes are the most used tobacco product by youth.
* **Immediate increase in sales age** – Rather than phase it in over several years, increasing the age to 21 all at once will make public education and enforcement of the new minimum age easier.
* **No military exemption** – Tobacco has an impact on our nation’s military readiness and has negatively affected recruitment rates nationwide.
* **New laws that punish children are opposed** – Criminal penalties on youth possession have not been demonstrated to be an effective tobacco control strategy.

**Facts and Stats**

* Pennsylvanians Support Tobacco 21. A representative survey of over 3,000 PA voters found that:
  + The majority (68.4%) favor raising the sales age from 18 to 21.
  + Most current smokers (54.4%) and former smokers (72.7%) favor raising the sales age.
  + Non-partisan issue: Most Democrats (72.3%) and Republicans (67.5%) support raising the age.
  + Only about 1 in 10 Pennsylvania voters strongly oppose Tobacco 21
* A 2015 National Academy of Medicine report found that increasing the minimum age of sale for tobacco products to at least 21 years old nationwide could prevent 223,000 deaths among people born between 2000 and 2019, including 50,000 fewer dying from lung cancer, the nation’s leading cancer killer.
* The National Academy of Medicine report also predicts that smoking initiation will be reduced by 25 percent for 15-17 year olds and 15 percent for 18-20 year olds if the tobacco sales age is increased to 21.
* About 95 percent of adult smokers try their first cigarette before they turn 21.From the ages of 18 to 21, is also the time when many smokers transition from experimenting to regular use.
* According to the CDC, use of e-cigarettes among high school students increased by 78 percent from 2017 to 2018, leading the FDA to declare an epidemic.
* The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine has concluded that there is “substantial evidence” that if a youth or young adult uses an e-cigarette, they are at increased risk of using traditional cigarettes.
* Adolescents and young adults are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine and nicotine addiction, causing lasting, adverse consequences on brain development. The National Academy of Medicine report emphasizes that the brain continues to develop “until about age 25.”
* Younger kids often rely on older friends, classmates and peers to buy their tobacco products. Since students do not typically reach 21 years old while still in high school, increasing the age of sale would greatly reduce the number of high school students who could purchase tobacco products.
* As of July, 2019, eighteen states – Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia and Washington – have raised the tobacco sales age to 21, along with Washington, DC and at least 475 localities. Now more than 50 percent of Americans now live in areas covered by Tobacco 21 laws.

**Advocate Ask**

Do you support increasing the minimum sales age for tobacco products to 21 to protect future generations throughout Pennsylvania?

**Lobbying Ask**

Do you support Senate Bill 473, that increases the minimum sales age for tobacco products to 21 and adds e-cigarettes to the definition of tobacco products to protect future generations throughout Pennsylvania?