

2017 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 177

BY REPRESENTATIVE HOFFMANN

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to study the desirability and feasibility of increasing the minimum age to purchase tobacco products in Louisiana to twenty-one.

WHEREAS, national data show the ages of eighteen to twenty-one are a critical period when many smokers move from experimental smoking to regular, daily use; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, over eighty percent of adult smokers smoked their first cigarette before they turned eighteen, and ninety-five percent of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn twenty-one; and

WHEREAS, each day in the United States, more than three thousand two hundred youth aged eighteen years or younger smoke their first cigarette, and an additional two thousand one hundred youth and young adults become daily cigarette smokers; and

WHEREAS, the developing brains of young people are particularly susceptible to the addictive properties of nicotine, and tobacco industry documents show that those who start smoking by the age of eighteen are almost twice as likely to become lifetime smokers as those who start after they turn twenty-one; and

WHEREAS, increasing the tobacco sales age to twenty-one will help counter efforts to target young people at a critical time when many move from experimenting with tobacco to regular smoking; and

WHEREAS, research shows that children and adolescents often turn to older friends and classmates as sources of cigarettes and raising the tobacco age to twenty-one would reduce the likelihood that a high school student will be able to legally purchase tobacco products for other students and underage friends; and

WHEREAS, electronic smoking device use among minors has recently tripled; and

WHEREAS, tobacco use is the foremost preventable cause of premature death in the United States; and

WHEREAS, tobacco use is responsible for approximately four hundred eighty thousand deaths a year and over twenty million premature deaths in the United States over the past fifty years since the first surgeon general's report on smoking in 1964; and

WHEREAS, a March 2015 report by the Institute of Medicine strongly concluded that raising the tobacco sale age to twenty-one will have a substantial positive impact on public health and save lives; and

WHEREAS, the study found that raising the tobacco sale age will significantly reduce the number of adolescents and young adults who start smoking, reduce smoking-caused deaths, and immediately improve the health of adolescents, young adults, and young mothers who would be deterred from smoking; and

WHEREAS, the study predicts that if the minimum age for the sale of tobacco products was raised to twenty-one, over time, the adult smoking rate would decline by about twelve percent and smoking-related deaths would decline by ten percent; and

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine also predicts that raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products to twenty-one nationwide would result in two hundred twenty-three thousand fewer premature deaths, fifty thousand fewer deaths from lung cancer, and four million two hundred thousand fewer years of life lost for those born between 2000 and 2019, and that it would result in near immediate reductions in preterm birth, low birth weight, and sudden infant death syndrome; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, California became the second state in the United States, joining Hawaii, to raise the tobacco sale age to twenty-one; and

WHEREAS, at least two hundred and twenty-five localities in sixteen states have also raised the tobacco age to twenty-one, including Washington D.C., San Francisco, Boston, New York City, Chicago, Cleveland, and both Kansas cities; and

WHEREAS, statewide legislation to do so is also being considered in several other states; and

WHEREAS, three-quarters of adults in the United States favor raising the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products to twenty-one, including seven in ten smokers; and

WHEREAS, the annual economic impact of smoking in the United States is more than three hundred billion dollars in healthcare and lost worker productivity costs; and

WHEREAS, the retail impact of ordinances mandating a minimum legal sales age of twenty-one for tobacco products is minimal, with an estimated decrease of only two percent; and

WHEREAS, raising the legal drinking age to twenty-one led to reduced alcohol use and dependence among youth, and contributed to a decline in drunk driving fatalities.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to study the desirability and feasibility of increasing the minimum age to purchase tobacco products in Louisiana to twenty-one.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department shall develop findings and recommendations concerning the desirability and feasibility of increasing the minimum age to purchase tobacco products to twenty-one, and shall submit such findings and recommendations in the form of a written report to the House Committee on Health and Welfare no later than thirty days prior to the convening of the 2018 Regular Session of the Legislature.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES