

Governor Abbott Signs Tobacco 21 Into Law

Austin, TX – Senator Eddie Lucio (D-Brownsville), joint authored legislation increasing the age to purchase tobacco from 18 to 21 years.

Texas gov. signs law increasing age to buy tobacco products to 21*

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has signed Senate Bill 21 into law, which will end the sale of tobacco products to those under 21. Supporters say increasing the minimum age by three years should reduce the risk of addiction.

Abbott on Friday signed the legislation, which covers cigarettes, e-cigarettes or other tobacco products. The only exception to the law is for those in the military.

The law will go into effect September 1.

Anyone caught breaking this new law, the bill states, will face a Class C misdemeanor and a fine of up to \$500.

Texas is among a growing number of states raising the tobacco age. [Illinois signed similar legislation](#) in May. States where the legal age is already 21 include Hawaii, California, New Jersey, Oregon, Maine and Massachusetts. Laws will take effect later this year in Arkansas and Virginia.

Shelby Massey with the American Heart Association told [CNN affiliate KXAN-TV](#), "Delaying the age when young people first begin to use tobacco -- the leading cause of preventable death -- will reduce the risk they will develop a deadly addiction."

The number of middle and high school tobacco users increased by 36% between 2017 and 2018, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC). The increase, the CDC states, is due to the "surge in e-cigarette use."

"The skyrocketing growth of young people's e-cigarette use over the past year threatens to erase progress made in reducing youth tobacco use. It's putting a new generation at risk for nicotine addiction," said CDC Director Robert R. Redfield.

[Texas21](#), a coalition of organizations whose mission is to prevent tobacco use and raise the tobacco age to 21, said 7.4% of Texas high school students smoke. It said about 95% of smokers start before 21.

The CDC said white high school students (32.4%) and Hispanic middle school students (9.5%) used the most tobacco products in their grade categories.

CNN's Emanuella Grinberg contributed to this report.

* Vera, Amir., & Grinberg, Emanuella. "Texas gov. signs law increasing age to buy tobacco products to 21." *KSAT ABC 12*, 08 June 2019, https://www.ksat.com/health/texas-gov-signs-law-increasing-age-to-buy-tobacco-products-to-21?utm_source=Editorial%3A+Texas+Tribune+Master&utm_campaign=0af9a348e5-trib-newsletters-the-brief&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d9a68d8efc-0af9a348e5-101962065&mc_cid=0af9a348e5&mc_eid=b54d65eabb