

Notes on Tobacco Free Generation (TFG)

draft Dec 3, 2024

This month, the Belchertown Board of Health will consider changes to our Tobacco Sales Regulations. Among the changes is a proposal to restrict sales to those born on or after 01/01/2004.

- Nine Towns have already adopted TFG (and counting)
 - 2020: Brookline
 - 2024: Concord, Malden, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Melrose, Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield, WinchesterOther towns are actively considering adoption (e.g., Chelsea, Marlborough, Montague, Needham, Newton, Northampton)
- TFG strategy has been endorsed by World Health Organization.
- Tobacco and Vapes Bill passes UK Parliament 415-47 ("*Stopping the Start*")
- Approved by Supreme Judicial Court (Six Brothers Inc. vs. Town of Brookline), 03/08/2024
 - a. Originally, age 18-to-21; age increased town-by-town.
 - b. Needham in 2005 first city in US to raise age to 21.
 - c. Over 175 towns approved age 21 before Legislature acted statewide in 2018.
 - d. "No equal protection discrimination" (page 29 of opinion)
- Diseases
 - a. Well-known: Cancer of lungs, throat, mouth; heart disease; stroke; emphysema
 - b. Macular degeneration → blindness
 - c. COPD: Chronic Obstruction Pulmonary Disease (80% caused by smoking)
- Tobacco is an **entry drug for addiction** to many other addictive drugs, like fentanyl, cocaine, heroin.
- Deaths (US Surgeon General)
 - a. 20 million died from smoking between 1964 and 2014.
 - b. Second-hand smoke caused 2.5 million deaths.
- Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the U. S., killing 480,000 people each year, more than car accidents, murders, suicides and drug overdoses *combined*.
- We have centuries-long traditions of different ages for different rights
 - a. Driving Learner's Permit: age 16; must be accompanied by driver over 18; Driving full license: 18
 - b. Truck driver's license: age 18 in-state (Massachusetts), age 21 out-of-state (Federal)
 - c. State Legislature: age 21; US House of Representatives: 25, US Senate: 30, President: 35
- **No one will lose an existing right.** It's not like seat belts, motorcycle helmets, or raising age from 18-to-21.
- What about cannabis, alcohol, guns, sports betting?
 - a. **Tobacco may be the only legal substance that kills, even if used as recommended by the manufacturers.** We cannot name another. (Unlike asbestos and lead paint, which were banned completely, this would not have as wide an impact.)
 - b. Cannabis and alcohol do not kill, if used as recommended by the manufacturers.
 - c. Guns, if used as recommended in hunting or a deterrent, do not kill people.
 - d. Sports betting, and other forms of gambling, do not kill, if used as recommended by promoters.
- Is this an effort to legislate changes in behavior?

No! The only behavior that will change is of the **sales** of the dangerous, addictive drug called nicotine. No one is proposing making possession illegal, even among children.
- Anti-smoking efforts **do** bring deep reductions over time.
 - 1964: 42% smoked; 2022: <12% smoked, a 71% reduction.
- "We estimated that 1,186,500 lung cancer deaths in people born during 2006-2010 could be prevented if (a tobacco free generation) was achieved." – *Lancet Public Health*, October 2024
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39366730/>
- Legal: Interview with "Distinguished Scholar" Law Professor Katharine Silbaugh, Boston University, in *New England Journal of Medicine*: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/10.1056/NEJMedo007543/full/>
Belchertown has commitments for pro-bono (free) legal support for challenges. (No one expects any.)