



Association for Nonsmokers - Minnesota

JANUARY 2018 Vol 34 Number 1



ANSR staff photo

Menthol Coalition members and advocates celebrate with Saint Paul City Council Members Jane Prince and Rebecca Noecker after an ordinance restricting the sale of menthol tobacco products passed in November.

Saint Paul restricts sale of menthol products

The Saint Paul City Council listened to a large and diverse community turnout, voting in favor of a healthy community by restricting the sale of flavored tobacco products to adult-only tobacco and liquor stores.

The council passed the ordinance 6-1. Councilmember Jane Prince authored the ordinance, which is designed to reduce youth smoking and combat tobacco industry targeting.

“I decided to support the menthol restriction in response to a very

broad-based coalition of community groups: people of color, young people, the LGBTQ community, the medical community, and our own public health department,” Prince said. “The coalition made me aware that the tobacco industry has targeted young people and communities of color for decades, focusing the sale of menthol products in communities like the ones I represent. I am fed up with this horrible industry that has cost our city, state and nation a

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Notice of Special Meeting of the Membership: The meeting will be held April 19, 2018 at 5:30 p.m. in Room 303 at the ANSR office, 2395 University Ave. W.

ANSR is proposing to change the following article of the bylaws as follows.

Article IV Board of Directors, Section A-Size of board of directors.

Current: There shall be a board of directors consisting of 11 persons.

Proposed: There shall be a board of directors consisting of 9 to 13 persons.

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tremendous fortune in dollars and, more importantly, lives.”

The tobacco industry has targeted the African American community for five decades with menthol tobacco products. The industry also targets youth, women and the LGBTQ community. This has contributed to the health disparities seen in Saint Paul and across Minnesota.

“Menthol is so addictive that it makes it extremely hard to quit,” said Sylvia Amos, President of the Minnesota State Baptist Convention Women’s Auxiliary. “This fight is about saving lives. Saint Paul is fortunate to have a City Council that is willing to lead on this issue.”

The ordinance had tremendous community support behind it, including 50-plus organizations involved in the Minnesota Menthol Coalition, such as Aurora-St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, African American Leadership Forum, Saint Paul National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), God Squad, Hmong Health Care Professionals Coalition (HHPC) and Anglos Latinos Motivados a Superarse (ALMAS), as well as numerous faith-based organizations and churches. Many African American community leaders, including Minnesota Rep.

Rena Moran, strongly supported the ordinance.

The community was passionate in placing the health of residents over profits for the tobacco industry.

“When the opposition said we had nothing to lose, it hurt me to the core,” said Damone Presley, ASANDC Youth Count Program Director,

“We lose lives. We lose families, children, elders. We lose our community. Thanks to the Saint Paul City Council for putting youth over tobacco industry profits. This ordinance will help protect our communities from the predatory tobacco industry.”

Tobacco companies forced to issue corrective statements

History was made last year as tobacco companies were finally forced to tell the truth about their deadly products.

A federal court found major tobacco companies Philip Morris (now Altria), R.J. Reynolds and Lorillard engaged in fraud, conspiracy and racketeering to hide the dangers of smoking and secondhand smoke and how they manipulated their products to create and sustain addiction. Their deceptive acts included misleading the public, suppressing research and destroying documents to protect their profits. After failed appeals, the industry was forced to start running ads containing corrective statements.

The ads admit facts such as the following:

- Smoking kills, on average, 1,200 Americans. Every day.
- More people die every year from smoking than from murder, AIDS, suicide, drugs, car crashes and alcohol, combined.
- Cigarette companies intentionally designed cigarettes with enough nicotine to create and sustain addiction.
- All cigarettes cause cancer, lung disease, heart attacks and premature death – “lights,” “low tar,” “ultra lights,”



The tobacco industry was forced to issue corrective statements after a decade-long court battle. The ads placed by the tobacco industry didn’t give the full story about how deceptive the industry has been in addicting so many people to tobacco, so ClearWay Minnesota created additional advertising to help out. ClearWay has released their clarifying ads on social media and also took out a full-page ad in the Star Tribune on Dec. 9. Above is a sample of a “corrected” social media post.

and “naturals.” There is no safe cigarette.

- There’s no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

The ANSR Bulletin is published quarterly.

For more information, contact ANSR at:

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ANSR staff photo

Advocates in Saint Louis Park celebrate after the City Council passed an ordinance restricting the sale of flavored tobacco products. The city is the first in the state to restrict flavor and raise the tobacco sale age to 21.

Saint Louis Park doubles down

City first in MN to raise tobacco sale age to 21, restrict sale of flavored tobacco

The Saint Louis Park City Council showed its dedication to protecting its youth on Dec. 4. The City Council voted unanimously to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products within the city. This is the second major initiative the city has undertaken to reduce youth smoking. The city also raised the tobacco sale age to 21.

The city is the fourth in Minnesota to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco, following, Minneapolis, Saint Paul and Shoreview. Earlier this year, Saint Louis Park was the second

city to raise the sale age for tobacco products to 21. It is the first city in Minnesota to do both.

“I’m proud we passed Tobacco 21, but this is also necessary,” councilmember Sue Sanger said during the hearing on Nov. 20. “Big Tobacco is aiming (these products) at younger people to get them hooked. I brought this issue up more than a year ago with the goal and hope of improving the public health of the entire community but especially the public health of our younger population and to try and make it more

difficult for younger people to have access to flavored tobacco and all tobacco products.”

In 2009, the Food and Drug Administration banned flavoring in cigarettes but didn’t extend this to other tobacco products. Saint Louis Park’s action closes that loophole. The tobacco industry has a long history of targeting young people with flavored tobacco.

“Most start out because it seems cool,” said Saint Louis Park High sophomore Eitan Weinstein, “But it can lead

to nicotine addiction and further health problems in the future.”

Matt Flory, president elect of the Minnesota Public Health Association and a resident, said he was proud of the council.

“As a father, I am proud to be raising my kids in a community that puts children first. All seven city council members recognize the potential public health impact of Tobacco 21 and a ban on flavored tobacco,” Flory said. “I hope other cities will join us to create a smoke-free generation throughout Minnesota.”



ANSR staff photo

Advocates in Robbinsdale celebrate after the City Council passed an ordinance that restricted the sale of flavored tobacco products to adult-only tobacco stores and set a minimum price for cigars.

Robbinsdale restricts sale of flavored tobacco products, sets cigar minimum

The Robbinsdale City Council took strong measures to protect youth from the harms of tobacco on Dec. 5. The City Council voted unanimously to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products to adult-only tobacco stores and to establish a minimum price for cheap, flavored cigars.

Robbinsdale is the fifth Minnesota to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco, following, Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Shoreview and Saint Louis Park. Several Minnesota cities have set minimum prices for cigars, including Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Brooklyn Center, Bloomington, Richfield and Maplewood.

“For me, I want to lead and not just say the lowest common denominator is what we should go with,”

councilmember Dan Rogan said after the first reading. “This change makes sense. It puts us in line with what other forward-looking communities are doing who are trying to address this.”

In Robbinsdale, flavored cigars cost as little as three for 89 cents. This ordinance sets a minimum price of \$2.60 per cigar and \$10.40 for packs of four or more.

Moving flavored cigars, which are often brightly packaged and are geared toward youth initiation, to adult-only tobacco stores reduces the visibility of the products.

“Thank you to the city council for taking the steps to make Robbinsdale a healthier city,” said advocate Kate Richardson, who organized support

within the community for the policies. “I’m thankful your involvement and concern for the issue and for listening to residents and taking it into consideration.

“I look forward to continuing the process in making our city great and continuing the conversation around increasing the tobacco sales age to 21 in the near future.

“We’ve taken a great step tonight to protect our youth. I’m pleased with all the other Robbinsdale residents who came forward to support a healthy community.”

Robbinsdale considered raising the sale age for tobacco to 21 but didn’t vote on that. The council passed a resolution supporting a statewide initiative to raise the age to 21.

Plymouth sets tobacco sales age at 21

The Plymouth City Council took steps to protect its youth by voting 4-3 to raise the sale age for all tobacco products to 21 on Nov. 28.

Council members Jim Davis and Ned Carroll urged fellow members to support the ordinance, making Plymouth a leader in the state. Council member Jim Willis was also vocal in his support, while Judy Johnson also voted in favor.

“We need to take the lead on this,” Carroll said.

Added Davis, “Health issues associated with smoking are well-documented. I’d rather be a leader than a follower on this.”

Plymouth became the fourth city in Minnesota to raise the age to 21. The city joins five states – Hawaii, California, New Jersey, Maine and Oregon – and more than 275 municipalities in protecting youth by raising the sales age for tobacco to 21. Edina, St. Louis Park, and Bloomington also raised the tobacco



ANSR staff photo

Advocates in Plymouth celebrate the City Council setting the sales age for tobacco at 21.

sales age this year. More than 95 percent of current smokers started smoking before they turned 21. If youth don’t start smoking before the age of 21, they likely never will. Needham, Mass., raised the tobacco age to 21 in 2005 and within five years, tobacco use among high school students decreased by nearly half.

“It’s inspiring to see local advocacy

in action and to see our city council choose protecting kids over Big Tobacco profits,” said advocate Caitlin DeVos, who volunteers with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. “I’m grateful to the community members who showed support and to see that the council wants to advocate with us at the state level.”

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Bloomington raises tobacco sales age to 21

One of the fastest growing trends in reducing the youth tobacco usage rates is centered around lifting the sales age for tobacco to 21.

While Minnesota as a state has not taken a full look at this, local municipalities are taking it on themselves to protect youth.

The Bloomington City Council did its part with a unanimous vote on Nov. 6 to raise the sale age for all tobacco products to 21.

“Adopting this now, instead of three months or six months from now, we probably will save somebody’s life,” said Bloomington Council Member Eldon Spencer. “We might save five or 10 lives and that’s probably more than we do at the average Council meeting. So, I think it is a very good step and I want to be part of it.”

Bloomington became the third city in Minnesota to raise the age to 21. In May, Edina became the first city in



ANSR staff photo

Bloomington advocates celebrate after the city becomes the third in the state to raise the age.

Minnesota to raise the age to 21. Saint Louis Park followed in June.

“I am proud to be a part of a community that is willing to take the extra step to protect our young people from the harms of tobacco,” said Jenna Carter, a mother and Bloomington resident who works for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Center for Prevention.

“I have seen first-hand what addiction to tobacco can do, and I am happy that the Bloomington City Council unanimously voted for this ordinance.”

Bloomington’s Council had previously taken steps to protect its youth by establishing a minimum price for cheap, flavored cigars. Before that, cigars were as cheap as three for \$.99.