

## New York lifts smoking age to 21

Limit will be among toughest in US and is aimed at bringing down the rate of tobacco use amongst the young

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New York City council members have voted to ban tobacco sales to under-21s. Photograph: Eric Thayer/Reuters

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**New York** City is banning people younger than 21 from buying or being sold cigarettes under tobacco age limits that will be among the toughest in the US.

The city council voted overwhelming on Wednesday to raise the age from 18 to 21 for cigarettes, certain tobacco products and electronic vapour smokes. Another measure sets a minimum price of \$10.50 a pack for tobacco cigarettes and steps up law enforcement on illegal tobacco sales.

"This will literally save many, many lives," said city councillor James Gennaro, the bill's sponsor, whose mother and father died from tobacco-related illnesses. "I've lived with it, I've seen it ... but I feel good today."

The mayor, Michael Bloomberg, who is a strong supporter of the tough smoking restrictions, has 30 days to sign the bills into law. The minimum age bill will take effect 180 days after enactment.

"We know that tobacco dependence can begin very soon after a young person first tries smoking so it's critical that we stop young people from smoking before they ever start," Bloomberg said.

With Wednesday's vote, New York is by far the biggest city to bar cigarette sales to 19 and 20-year-olds. Similar legislation is expected to come to a vote in Hawaii this December. The tobacco-buying age is 21 in Needham, Massachusetts, and will rise to 21 in January in nearby Canton, Massachusetts. The state of New Jersey is considering a similar proposal.

Councillors who pushed for the change cited statistics showing the youth smoking rate has resisted efforts to bring it down, staying at 8.5% since 2007.

"We have to do more and that's what we're doing today," said Christine Quinn, the council speaker. "We have a real chance of leading the country and the world."

The city's existing age limit of 18 is a federal minimum that is standard in many places. Smoking in New York's parks and beaches is prohibited, as it is in restaurants.

Cigarette manufacturers have suggested young adult smokers may just turn to the black market merchants and some smokers say it is unfair and patronising to tell people considered mature enough to vote and serve in the military that they are not old enough to decide whether to smoke.

Bloomberg has also pushed for laws similar to other countries where cigarettes are kept concealed in stores unless a customer asks for them. However the measure has been delayed by legal issues and the advent of e-cigarettes, which the council says it needs more time to consider.

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/31/new-york-usa>

Tasks:

1. Review and learn the vocabulary
2. Discussion: control versus human rights  
How do we protect vulnerable people from health hazards?  
How do we strike a good balance between the state playing „mother“ and allowing freedom?
3. Present summary and opinions to class