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News Record **PATRIOT** **ATTON TARBLOM**  
ISSN 2328-6113 (print)

**CMD** media  
online 24/7 since 2002  
ISSN 2328-6121 (online)

## Federal lawmakers seek to raise the smoking age to 21

by [Staff Report](#) • October 14, 2015; NJTODAY.NET

A large group of federal lawmakers has introduced the [Tobacco to 21 Act](#) (S.2100), legislation that would prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone under the age of 21.

“We know that the earlier smokers begin their unhealthy addiction to nicotine, the more likely they are to suffer from tobacco-related diseases or die,” said Senator Brian Schatz (D-Hawai‘i). “This year, Hawai‘i became the first state in the nation to raise the minimum smoking age to 21. It was an historic public health achievement that we should adopt nationwide. By raising the minimum tobacco age of sale to 21 across the country, we can cut the number of new smokers each year; build a healthier, tobacco free America; and save lives.”

“Thanks to tobacco control measures like banning smoking in public places and placing warning labels on cigarette cartons, far fewer people smoke now than did fifty years ago,” said Senator Dick Durbin (D-Ill.). “As a result, far fewer families have lost loved ones to tobacco-related disease and death. But we still have a long way to go. We can help prevent a new generation from falling prey to this deadly epidemic by passing another commonsense measure to reduce youth tobacco use: raising the minimum tobacco age of sale to 21.”

“The harder it is for children and teenagers to get their hands on tobacco products, the easier it will be to keep our next generation from becoming hooked on nicotine,” said Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio). “Our country has come a long way on tobacco products – we’ve banned the marketing of cigarettes to children, we’ve prohibited the sale to minors, and we’ve helped people find ways to quit once they are hooked – but we need to do more to keep people from becoming addicted in the first place. I’m pleased that communities in Ohio are leading the way by raising the minimum age for tobacco sales to 21. We should follow their lead and continue these efforts until smoking is no longer the leading cause of preventable and premature death in the U.S.”

“Stopping tobacco sales to people under 21 reduces smoking by kids and teens, saves lives, and leads to healthier communities,” Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) said. “Cities and towns in Massachusetts have led the nation in raising the smoking age. Now it’s time to put this policy in place all across the country.”

In the last 50 years, nearly 21 million people in the United States have died due to tobacco-related illnesses, making it the leading cause of preventable death in the country.

A recent report by the [Institute of Medicine](#) found that raising the legal age of sale of tobacco products to 21 nationwide would reduce the number of new tobacco users, decrease smoking frequency by 12 percent, and save more than 220,000 lives from deaths related to smoking.

Other senators co-sponsoring the bill are: Senators Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), Mazie Hirono (D-Hawai‘i), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.). Companion legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives by U.S. Representatives Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) and Mark Takai (D-Hawai‘i).

The Tobacco to 21 Act is supported by the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Academy of Pediatrics, Academic Pediatric Association, American Pediatric Society, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Veterans (AMVETS), American Public Health Association, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

It is also endorsed by Trust for America’s Health, Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs, First Focus Campaign for Children, Pediatric Policy Council, Society for Pediatric Research, Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL), Hawai‘i Medical Service Association, and Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai‘i.

Click [here](#) for a summary of the Tobacco to 21 Act.

<http://njtoday.net/2015/10/14/lawmakers-seek-to-raise-the-smoking-age-to-21/>