

# Raising the minimum smoking age to 21.

**TEENS ENLIST IN THE MILITARY FOR 4 YEARS... THEY START SMOKING FOR LIFE.**



**OLD ENOUGH TO SERVE SHOULDN'T MEAN OLD ENOUGH TO SMOKE.**

## **BIG TOBACCO RECRUITS NEW SMOKERS EARLY:**

Nearly 90% of adult smokers started in their teenage years<sup>1</sup> – and the tobacco industry knows it. A report issued by Phillip Morris in 1986 stated, “Raising the legal minimum age for cigarette purchaser to 21 could gut our key young adult market.”<sup>2</sup>

## **RAISING THE MINIMUM SMOKING AGE TO 21 WILL DRASTICALLY REDUCE THIS PROBLEM:**

Only 10% of smokers start at age 21 or older.<sup>3</sup> If someone reaches 21 without becoming a smoker, there's only a 2% chance they will start.<sup>4</sup> The Institute of Medicine estimates that raising the minimum age will result in a 12% overall reduction in the smoking rate, resulting in 223,000 fewer premature deaths.<sup>5</sup>

1. Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products. Institute of Medicine. March 2015.

2. Philip Morris Discussion Draft of Sociopolitical Strategy <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/aba84e00/pdf>

3. This is a conservative estimate. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. National Health Interview Survey, 2008. Analysis by the American Lung Association, Research and Program Services Division using SPSS software

4. Tobacco21.org [http://tobacco21.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/T21HandBook1\\_2015.pdf](http://tobacco21.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/T21HandBook1_2015.pdf)

5. Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products. Institute of Medicine. March 2015.

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## **RAISING THE MINIMUM AGE WORKS:**

Drinking among persons ages 18-20 declined almost 20% in the first six years after the legal drinking age was raised to 21 in 1984; it declined even more sharply among those ages 21-25, dropping 26% over the same time period.<sup>6</sup>

After raising the minimum smoking age to 21 in 2005, the town of Needham, MA saw the youth smoking rate drop from 13% to 6.7% in the first five years. Meanwhile, surrounding towns where the smoking age was still 18 only saw youth smoking decrease from 15% to 12.4%.<sup>7</sup>

## **RAISING THE MINIMUM AGE HAS RIPPLE EFFECTS ON YOUTH SMOKING:**

Many of the cigarettes smoked by minors are purchased by people between ages 18-21. By raising the minimum smoking age, we greatly reduce the accessibility of cigarettes for minors.<sup>8</sup>

## **RAISING THE MINIMUM AGE WILL NOT HURT LOCAL BUSINESS:**

One of the groups most opposed to raising the minimum age is not smokers, but retailers, who claim they will go out of business. However, tobacco sales to 18-21 year-olds account for only 2% of retail tobacco sales. (Yet create 90% of new smokers!)<sup>9</sup>

Not a single convenience store went out of business in Needham after the town raised the minimum smoking age. Furthermore CVS and Target have voluntarily stopped selling tobacco products, leaving more market share to convenience stores.<sup>10</sup>

## **THE MILITARY DOESN'T WANT BIG TOBACCO RECRUITING YOUNG SMOKERS EITHER:**

The Army's own Surgeon General says soldiers who smoke are less ready for combat and take longer to heal from injuries.<sup>11</sup> Earlier this year, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter issued new policies to raise cigarette prices on military bases and enlarge smoke-free areas as part of the military's efforts to reduce smoking rates.

6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Fact Sheets - Age 21 Minimum Legal Drinking Age <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/minimum-legal-drinking-age.htm>

7. Analysis of 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System data by Jonathan P. Winickoff, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School

8. Tobacco21.org [http://tobacco21.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/T21HandBook1\\_2015.pdf](http://tobacco21.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/T21HandBook1_2015.pdf)

9. Winickoff JP, Hartman L, Chen ML, Gottlieb M, Nabi-Burza E, DiFranza JR. Minimal Retail Impact of Raising Tobacco Sales Age to 21. American Journal of Public Health. 2014. In Press.3 2

10. Tobacco21.org [http://tobacco21.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/T21HandBook1\\_2015.pdf](http://tobacco21.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/T21HandBook1_2015.pdf)

11. <http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/issue.php?issue=2012-11-20>



## Don't let Big Tobacco enlist another generation of young smokers.

Learn more about how you can help at [tobaccofree-ri.org](http://tobaccofree-ri.org).