



CHARLES ECKERT

Under the plan, no pharmacies in New York State would be able to sell tobacco products.

## GOV AIMS TO HIKE AGE FOR E-CIG, TOBACCO SMOKING

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Vapers and cigarette smokers would have to be at least 21 years old to buy their products in New York State under a proposal Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said will be part of his 2019 budget plan.

And no pharmacies would be able to sell tobacco products, he proposed in a statement on Saturday. CVS has not sold tobacco since 2014, but many drugstores still do so.

"In New York, we refuse to stand idly by while unscrupulous businesses target our young people and put their very futures at risk," Cuomo said ahead of his Tuesday budget address. He also plans to recommend legalizing marijuana, codifying abortion rights, imposing congestion tolls on Manhattan roads and giving child victims of sex crimes more time to seek criminal charges or sue abusers.

Currently, e-cigarettes, often with kid-appealing flavors such as cotton candy, and tobacco products can be sold to 18-year-olds — except in 15 counties, including Nassau and Suffolk, and New York City, which already require buyers to be 21. Younger teens, Cuomo noted, often obtain e-cigarettes — whose use is soaring among high schoolers — from friends who buy them legally.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, last August began requiring all sellers and advertisers to include health warning statements.

A Cuomo spokesman did not say whether the Health Department will continue to pursue a proposal prohibiting the possession, distribution or sale of almost all flavored e-cigarettes that it unveiled in November. Cuomo said only that he will clarify the department's power to ban the sale of certain flavored liquids used in e-cigarettes, among other measures.

The department's earlier plan only would have excluded tobacco and menthol-flavored cigarettes. Menthol appeals to adults, experts say, not teens, who favor cherry, cinnamon, chocolate and bubble-gum flavors.

Suffolk might soon enact a sweeping ban. Legis. William Spencer (D-Centerport) said he might revise his bill banning flavored e-cigarettes and liquid nicotine. Possibilities, he said, include stiffening how online buyers verify their ages, limiting individual bulk sales to keep e-cigarettes from being resold to minors, and restricting marketing to youngsters at places such as amusement parks.

"We are in support of Doc Spencer's legislation," a spokeswoman for County Executive Steve Bellone said. In April, Suffolk

will impose a new \$2,000 fine for each violation of the age requirement after the first sale, which carries a \$1,000 penalty.

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran saluted Cuomo's plan. "This legislation is more important than ever with rising tobacco and e-cigarette use trends among our youth," she said.

A spokeswoman for the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York had no comment.

Saying the sale of e-cigarettes "is almost entirely unregulated," Cuomo also proposed limiting sales to licensed retailers.

Vapes, vaporizers, vape and hookah pens and electronic cigarettes can deliver nicotine and other chemicals in a liquid that is heated by batteries and then inhaled, the FDA says. Puffers can inhale formaldehyde, which causes cancer; volatile organic compounds, which can harm their livers, kidneys and nervous systems; and flavoring chemicals, some linked to a serious lung disease, the American Cancer Society says.

Cheryl Richter, executive director of the New York State Vapor Association, said vaping was safer than cigarettes and more likely to enable people to quit than nicotine patches. Her group, she said, backs toughening proofs buyers submit to verify their ages.

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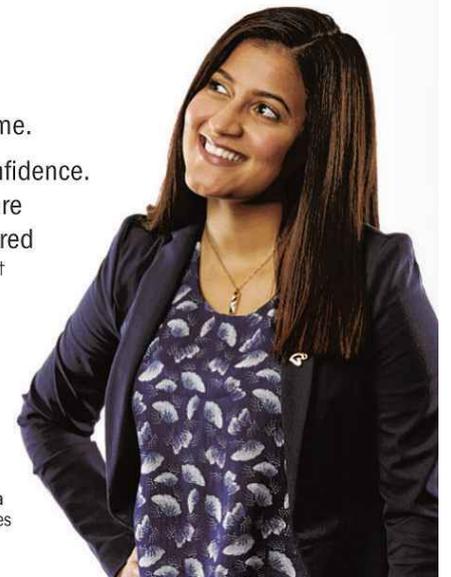
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