



Editorial: Questions about smoking, vaping age increase to 21

December 28, 2019

Buried within the \$1.4 trillion spending package that President Donald Trump signed in the wake of an impeachment vote was an interesting law change at the federal level.

Beginning in the summer of 2020, the nationwide legal age for buying tobacco is being raised from 18 to 21. The increase in the tobacco purchasing age also applies to e-cigarettes and vaping devices.

Although more than 530 cities and counties across the country have already enacted some sort of policy, the Tobacco 21 movement, federal law prohibited the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) from enforcing rules against retailers who sold to 18- to 20-year-olds.

The City of Tucson in October voted to raise the minimum age to buy e-cigarettes and other tobacco products to 21, the fifth Arizona city to do so. That law goes into effect Jan. 1, 2020.

But now, this federal law change removes the confusion, which will likely make state, local and FDA enforcement more effective, according to Stanton A. Giantz, PhD, the director for the Center for Tobacco Research Control & Education.

Among a few questions raised within the Courier editorial board was one we couldn't ignore: What do all the teenagers (ages 18-20) who are hooked on smoking or vaping do when local businesses begin to refuse selling tobacco products to them this summer?

Trevor Burrus, a research fellow at the Cato Institute, recently penned an article on nbnews.com that basically said teenage vapers will likely turn to illicit vaping products under the new law.

“Because that’s what people do when legal channels are shut off,” Burrus said.

That has yet to be seen.

Another question: With thousands of local teenagers buying vaping products and smoking tobacco, the tax revenue of \$2.37 a pack could take a big hit. How will that effect our local economy?

Not that it should matter, because getting young people off smoking products is more important, but still it is a legitimate question to ask.

On the other side of the coin, the federal government has now made it illegal for legal adults (18 and older) to buy tobacco, yet being 18 in the U.S. means you can vote, die for your country, get married, have children, get a credit card and buy a rifle.

But now, they can't buy tobacco?