



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 7, 2019

CONTACT: Kirsten Voinis, 512-922-7141
or kvoinis@kvoinis.com

TEXAS BECOMES 16TH STATE TO RAISE TOBACCO SALE AGE TO 21
Governor's signature launches new tobacco protections for Texas youth

Gov. Greg Abbott today signed into law Senate Bill 21 to stop the sale of cigarettes, e-cigarettes and other tobacco products to Texans younger than 21, except for those in the military. The law will take effect on Sept. 1. A [Texas 21 poll](#) found that more than two-thirds of Texas voters support raising the minimum legal tobacco sale age to 21.

With the governor's signature, Texas becomes the 16th state in the U.S. to raise the minimum legal tobacco sale age from 18 to 21. The bill was championed by Sen. Joan Huffman (R-Houston) and Rep. John Zerwas, MD, (R-Richmond). In addition, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick made raising the tobacco age [one of his legislative priorities](#).

Members of the Texas 21 coalition made the following statements regarding Texas' tobacco 21 law:

Shelby Massey, government relations director-Texas, American Heart Association:

“Senate Bill 21 would not be law without the hard work and leadership of bill authors Senator Joan Huffman and Representative John Zerwas. Thank you to them, Governor Abbott and the Texas Legislature for taking this important step to reduce and eventually eliminate the toll of tobacco on young Texans. Delaying the age when young people first begin to use tobacco – the leading cause of preventable death – will reduce the risk they will develop a deadly addiction.”

Peter WT Pisters, MD, president of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center:

“Raising the legal sale age for tobacco products to 21 will have profound effects on the health of our future generations. Tobacco use can have devastating health impacts and can lead to a lifetime of nicotine addiction. Evidence suggests this change will reduce smoking and save lives, and we applaud Sen. Huffman, Rep. Zerwas and Lt. Gov. Patrick for supporting this policy to protect the health of Texans now and in the future.”

Janet Hurley, Board chair, Texas Academy of Family Physicians:

“Senate Bill 21 will save lives, save Texas money on preventable health care problems and protect young Texans from tobacco addiction. The Texas Legislature has stepped forward and led the way on this historic public health legislation.”

John Carlo, MD, Texas Public Health Coalition chair and Texas Medical Association Council on Legislation member:

“Something had to be done when 28,000 Texans die each year from tobacco use, and TMA and the Texas Public Health Coalition are thrilled that Sen. Joan Huffman and Rep. John Zerwas, MD,

persisted and refused to give up on our state's young people. Since almost all adult smokers got hooked before they were 21, we are grateful this law will save lives and prevent suffering.”

Ben G. Raimer, MD, president of the Texas Pediatric Society:

“An estimated 95 percent of smokers start before age 21, and we’re seeing an alarming surge of youth using e-cigarettes and similar products. Senate Bill 21 will prevent Texas youth from starting to use tobacco and help keep future generations smoke free.”

In Texas, 7.4 percent of high school students smoke and over 10 percent use e-cigarettes, while 10,400 kids become daily smokers every year. Nearly half a million (498,000) Texas children alive now will ultimately die prematurely from smoking if current trends continue.

In addition, a [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report](#) released in February found a 78 percent increase in high school students using e-cigarettes in one year, raising the number of middle and high school tobacco users to almost 5 million and reversing past progress to reduce youth tobacco product use.

For more information on the tobacco 21 issue – including numerous fact sheets – visit www.texas21.org.

The Texas 21 Coalition includes [almost 100 organizations](#), including the American Heart Association, Texas Academy of Family Physicians, Texas Medical Association, Texas Pediatric Society and Texas Public Health Coalition. The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center is present as an educational resource only. More information can be found at www.texas21.org. Follow the Coalition on Facebook at [/texas21](#) and Twitter at [@TexasTobacco21](#).

Texas 21 Organization Media Contacts:

Shelby Massey, American Heart Association, 512-568-2898, Shelby.Massey@heart.org

Clayton Boldt, MD Anderson, 713-792-9518, crboldt@mdanderson.org

Tom Banning, Texas Academy of Family Physicians, 512-497-0048, tbanning@tafp.org

Brent Annear, Texas Medical Association, 512-370-1381, Brent.annear@texmed.org

Clayton Travis, Texas Pediatric Society, 512-370-1516, clayton.travis@txpeds.org

-- ## --