

Bloomberg signs law banning cigarette sales to those under 21

November 19, 2013 by DAN RIVOLI. amNewYork



Mayor Michael Bloomberg Tuesday signed a law outlawing the sale of cigarettes to people younger than 21.

Increasing the age on cigarette purchases, he said, "will prevent young people from experimenting with tobacco when they are most likely to become addicted."

Bloomberg has crusaded against cigarettes throughout his 12 years in office, first banning smoking in bars and restaurants. The city also extended the smoking prohibition to parks and beaches. The new law also includes electronic cigarettes.

Council Speaker Christine Quinn said New York is the first major city to increase the smoking age and hopes others will follow.

"This legislation marks a major step forward in reducing youth smoking rates with the potential to spare thousands of New Yorkers from a lifetime of nicotine addiction and health problems," she said in a joint statement with Queens Councilman James Gennaro.

Bloomberg also signed legislation that aims to curb cigarette-tax evasion by letting the city Department of Finance lock up stores of repeat offenders and bans the use of coupons for cigarette purchases.

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