

Contra Costa Supes Vote Unanimously To Restrict Flavored Tobacco Sales

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MARTINEZ (CBS SF) — The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously Tuesday to prohibit the selling of flavored tobacco products near parks and **schools** in unincorporated areas of the county.

Flavored tobacco products are thought to disproportionately affect youth and communities of color, such as in the African American community where use of menthol cigarettes is high and men suffer from high mortality rates from lung cancer, according to the American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network.

The county's new regulations restrict the sale of menthol cigarettes, cigarillos, snuff and flavored e-cigarettes within 1,000 feet of what the county calls "youth-sensitive places," including public and **private** schools, playgrounds, parks and libraries.

The amendment is scheduled for a second reading July 18, and if approved it goes into effect 30 days later. County staff will be working on an outreach and education **campaign** to ensure that affected retailers are in compliance by Dec. 31.

Part of Tuesday's **debate** centered on the question of whether to include parks in the new regulation, and how to define them.

"I know youth gather in parks, but so do **adults**," Supervisor Karen Mitchoff said. "I'm more concerned about youth at schools," Mitchoff added.

Gioia countered that parks are traditionally considered a place for youth activities. "Are we forgetting that flavored tobacco is marketed to young people to get them **addicted** and hooked?" Supervisor John Gioia asked. "That's all I'm saying."

"I get that, but we've got to sort of be a little bit practical in certain places and I'm just suggesting a conversation around parks," Mitchoff said.

"Hold on, let's calm down for a moment," Supervisor **Federal** Glover said.

“Retailers aren’t supposed to be selling these **products** to minors in the first place,” Mitchoff said later. “It’s just a conundrum and it’s very frustrating.”

Several teens associated with or supporting anti-tobacco activists spoke during the public comment **period**, encouraging the supervisors to move forward with the amendment.

“With flavored **tobacco** being such an attractive nuisance to people of my age, it’s hard to stop us,” said Kayla Walker of Heritage High School in Brentwood.

“Supporting this, regulating the use of flavored tobacco, pushing it farther away will ensure the safety of my generation and improve the protection of my community,” Walker said.

The board also passed an accompanying ordinance to prohibit establishing new tobacco businesses, including hookah bars and vapor lounges, within 500 feet of an existing tobacco retailer or 1,000 feet of a school, playground, park or library.