

Tobacco and Vape Industry Opposition Messages

The following are messages used by the tobacco and vape industry to counter tobacco prevention policy. These messages are communicated through letters to local leaders, testimony at local council meetings, sound bites in the media and on social media.

Who Are the Messengers?

Rocky Mountain Smoke Free Alliance (RMSFA)
Smoke-Free Alternatives Trade Association (SFATA)
National Association of Tobacco Outlets (NATO)
American Vaping Association
Smoker-Friendly
Consumer Advocates for Smoke Free Alternatives Association (CASAA)
Vapor Technology Association
Local Vape Shop Owners/Staff

What Are the Messages?

Vaping and Harm Reduction	
Opposition Message	The Facts
The UK study – “The Royal College of Physicians in the United Kingdom concluded that vaping products are 95% safer than cigarettes.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This “study” was debunked years ago but is used by the vape industry over and over again.The 95% safer was not based off a comprehensive review of evidence but the summary of a meeting of twelve people - several of whom had taken money from e-cigarette or tobacco companies.“A systematic review which the report surprisingly fails to cite, came to a different conclusion. It found serious methodological problems in many of the 76 studies it reviewed, and one third of the studies (34%) were published by authors with conflicts of interest.”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Here are more quotes from the opinion piece in the British Medical Journal commenting on Public Health England: https://www.bmjjournals.org/content/351/bmj.h4863.full?ijkey=JjRWRNooXOeuEdK&keytype=ref
"The New England Journal of Medicine concluded vapor products to be twice as effective at helping smokers quit than traditional Nicotine Replacement Therapy Products."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18% of people who'd been assigned e-cigarettes were non-smokers at 1 year but 80% of them were still using e-cigarettes. 9.9% of people who'd been assigned NRT products were non-smokers at 1 year.
"The American Cancer Society and the CDC have both concluded that using vaping devices are less harmful than cigarettes."	Less harmful doesn't mean harmless.
Rocky Mountain Smoke Free Alliance (RMSFA) statement: "One cigarette contains approximately 7,000 chemicals, including tar and carbon monoxide, which have been proven to cause heart disease, lung cancer, and multiple forms of cancer. One vaping device has approximately 10 chemicals, including nicotine, but none of the most harmful chemicals, which cause the most common forms of cancer."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to avoid the discussion of whether or not their products are safe. The current public health crisis and injuries and deaths disproves the theory that e-cigarettes are harmless devices.
The members of the RMSFA sell low-dosage nicotine products with the most common amount of three (3) MG's per vaping device.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a comparison to JUUL that has (6) MG's per vaping device. This messaging is usually a counter argument when health advocates discuss the high nicotine content of JUUL products. E-cigarettes are not medical devices and should not be promoted as such. Doses are not measured.

Tobacco Retail Licensing

<i>Opposition Message</i>	<i>The Facts</i>
Cost of the license hurts the mom and pop shops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average tobacco retailer can attribute over 50% of their sales to tobacco products. • Law abiding retailers benefit when competing retailers no longer benefit from illegal tobacco product sales. • Colorado retailers report earning an average of \$18,000 per month from the sale of tobacco products. The nominal annual license fee effectively reduces youth use without harming local business.
Youth get tobacco products from social sources such as older friends and family members, tobacco retail restrictions only burden retailers but have little effect on curtailing youth tobacco product use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although some youth acquire tobacco products from social sources a significant percentage of youth purchase tobacco products directly from retailers. DOR and FDA compliance checks demonstrate that some retailers are selling tobacco products to youth. Local communities can prevent youth access to tobacco products in retail environments by requiring retailers who chose to sell tobacco products to obtain a license.
Businesses already pay for/have a license.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unless a Colorado community implements a tobacco retail license, local businesses are not required to have a license to sell tobacco products. There is no state tobacco retail license requirement in Colorado. A local sales tax license and/or a business and occupational tax license is different from a tobacco retail license.
Businesses do not get anything in return for paying for a license.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling age-restricted products is a privilege, with this privilege comes responsibility. • Much like alcohol and marijuana retailers, tobacco retailers are required to demonstrate compliance with the law. • Responsible business owners do not sell tobacco products to those who are underage. With frequent compliance checks, funded by nominal licensing fees, law abiding retailers benefit when their competitors no longer rake in profits from illegal sales.
Requiring a clerk to be at least 18 years of age to sell tobacco is a burden.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerks that are 18 years of age or older are less likely to sell tobacco to a minor. • Clerks are required to be at least 18 to sell alcohol. This should be no different for tobacco.

Tobacco is already highly regulated in the retail setting. We are under State and Federal regulation and get inspected by the DOR and the FDA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State enforcement efforts are inconsistent, lack meaningful penalties and only check a small percentage of retailers at infrequent intervals (sometimes not even every year). A local licensing law supports consistent local enforcement of all retailers and is an effective strategy for reducing illegal tobacco product sales.
This ordinance is unnecessary over-reach and is a way for the City to collect more money from small business owners to fill the City's coffers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Colorado pursuant to the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR), fees can only be used to defray the direct and indirect costs of providing a service or regulating an activity. Fees, unlike a tax do not raise revenue for general expenses of the government. Tobacco retail licensing fees can only be used to support the tobacco retail licensing program (e.g. administration, enforcement, education and implementation of the license).
Retailers are not informed about upcoming hearings and are not invited to participate in the process of developing an ordinance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a standard tactic used by opponents to local tobacco control policies. Opponents claim that they have not been informed about meetings to attempt to delay hearings, weaken momentum to pass policies and to attempt to organize opposition. City councils and boards of supervisors always provide public notice about upcoming meetings and retailers have the same access to this information as the public health community. In many cases, elected officials make a concerted effort to reach out to tobacco retailers when considering ordinances perceived to impact local business.
Local policies that prohibit self-service displays of tobacco products do not make sense for adult only shops. These "nanny state" policies inhibit the experience of premium cigar customers who prefer to personally select the product.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-service displays are an easy way for youth to access tobacco products. Even though it is illegal for youth to be present in adult-only stores strict compliance protocols that restrict under-aged access are not ensured. It is critical that a responsible adult such as off-duty law enforcement officer or other reliable adult prevent youth access to adult-only tobacco establishments. Furthermore, premium cigar customers will not miss out on the experience of holding and selecting the cigar of their choice, the only difference is that they do so with the assistance of a clerk.
Vape shops are small businesses and should be exempt because they're life-saving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-cigarettes and vaping products are tobacco products and are not FDA approved smoking cessation devices. TRL will help to ensure that vape shop owners comply with the law.

Minimum Legal Sales Age (MLSA) to 21

Opposition Message	The Facts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective December 20, 2019, all tobacco retailers are prohibited from selling tobacco products (all types) to anyone under the age of 21. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military members under 21 are not exempt. Current 18, 19 and 20 year-olds are not grandfathered in. The law immediately applies to anyone under the age of 21. The law is in effect but will not be enforced by the FDA for up to 270 days. If your community has a local law that states that a violation of federal law is a violation of local law than local enforcement of the Federal 21 law may occur. States and municipalities may pass stronger laws. States and municipalities may not pass weaker laws. For example, a local community may not pass 21 and exempt military personnel under 21. If your community has a local licensing law that requires clerks be the minimum legal sales age to sell tobacco than the clerk must be 21 years of age effective immediately. The minimum legal sales age is 21 for all people in all places. This applies to all states, U.S. territories, and Tribal jurisdictions. 	
More regulation will hurt my business and drive tobacco users to other cities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As more and more communities pass tobacco prevention laws this becomes a non-issue for tobacco product retailers across Colorado.
18-year-olds are adults/if they're old enough to serve in the military, they should be able to use tobacco.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the military have been targeted by the tobacco industry and adversely impacted by the toll of tobacco use. The Dept. of Defense supports anti-tobacco policies to keep their force healthy.¹ Many military leaders have voiced support for T21.²
Raising the age to 21 will hurt business due to lost revenue in that age group.	Although 18-20 year olds purchase less than 2% of cigarettes, this age group accounts for 90% of the supply to their underage peers. ³ (Small revenue impact, big health impact for kids.)

¹ Department of Defense. (2016). Policy Memorandum 16-001. <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/tobacco-free-living/INCOMING-CARTER-Tobacco-Policy-Memo.pdf>

² Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. (2019). Raising the tobacco sale age to 21: Implications for the military. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0388.pdf>

³ Jonathan P. Winickoff, MD, MPH, corresponding author Lester Hartman, MD, MPH, Minghua L. Chen, MD, MPH, Mark Gottlieb, JD, Emara Nabi-Burza, MBBS, MS, and Joseph R. DiFranza, MD. (2014). Retail Impact of Raising Tobacco Sales Age to 21 Years. *Am J Public Health*, 104(11): e18–e21.

18–20 year olds need access to vaping products for smoking cessation.	E-cigarettes are not an FDA approved cessation device. FDA approved products are available for smokers of all ages who want to quit. Additionally, research demonstrates that individuals who use vaping products are more likely than not to be dual product users, i.e. cigarettes and electronic smoking devices.
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Possession, Use, Purchase (PUP)/ Minor in Possession (MIP)

Opposition Message	The Facts
We should hold underaged minors responsible for possessing, purchasing and using tobacco products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some legislative bodies passed Possession, Use and Purchase (PUP) laws with the intention of reducing youth smoking by making kids more personally responsible for buying and using tobacco products. Penalizing children, however, has not been proven to be an effective strategy for reducing youth smoking; and some experts argue that PUP laws could actually detract from more effective enforcement measures and tobacco control efforts. PUP laws also unfairly punish and stigmatize children, many of whom became addicted at a young age as a result of the tobacco industry's aggressive marketing to kids (the industry spends \$9.5 billion a year in marketing and 96% of that is in the point of sale setting).⁴ In this way, PUP laws shift the blame away from the industry's irresponsible marketing and retailers' irresponsible sales, to its victims. These policies have been found to disproportionately impact African American and Latino students.⁵ Tobacco companies and their allies have a history of supporting PUP laws as alternatives to other laws that would produce greater declines in youth smoking.⁶

⁴ ibid.

⁵ Gottlieb NH, Loukas A, Corrao M, et al. (2004). Minors' tobacco possession law violations and intentions to smoke: implications for tobacco control. *Tobacco Control*, 13:237-243.

⁶ Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. (2018). Youth purchase, use, or possession laws are not effective tobacco prevention. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0074.pdf>

Wait for State/Feds

Opposition Message	The Facts
Federal law cover this.	<p>Federal Law:</p> <p>Companies that do not cease manufacture, distribution and sale of unauthorized flavored cartridge-based e-cigarettes (other than tobacco or menthol) risk FDA enforcement actions.</p> <p>The FDA intends to prioritize enforcement against these illegally marketed ENDS products by focusing on the following groups of products that do not have premarket authorization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any flavored, cartridge-based ENDS product (other than a tobacco- or menthol-flavored ENDS product); • All other ENDS products for which the manufacturer has failed to take (or is failing to take) adequate measures to prevent minors' access; and • Any ENDS product that is targeted to minors or likely to promote use of ENDS by minors. <p>The guidance is not a comprehensive response to the epidemic of youth use of flavored tobacco products; it does not restrict all flavors, does not include all e-cigarettes, and does not apply to other tobacco products such as flavored cigars.</p> <p>Local policies can be stronger and are more effective because they are usually better enforced with real, meaningful penalties for violation.</p>
Local communities should wait for the state to implement tobacco control policies.	<p>Local communities should not wait to act. Local tobacco prevention policy can be passed, implemented and enforced quickly which is important when dealing with an epidemic such as vape use among young people.</p> <p>While the federal and state illegal sales rates remain high, 9 out of 11 communities with local tobacco retail licensing in Colorado have had strong reductions in illegal sales after implementing their licensing laws.⁷</p>

⁷ A Levinson. Community Epidemiology & Program Evaluation Group (CEPEG), University of Colorado Cancer Center, 2019.

	Passage of state legislation is not guaranteed. Vaping is a significant health issue that is affecting our youth now.
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Opposition Message	The Facts
Some tobacco products should be exempt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco products from little cigars and chewing tobacco to cigarettes and e-juices come in hundreds of flavors that are attractive to youth. At least two-thirds of youth tobacco users report using tobacco products “because they come in flavors I like.”⁸ • Of teens and young adults who have ever used tobacco, 81% of teens and 86% of young adults reported that their first product was flavored.⁹ • Flavors, from menthol to mango, can mask the harsh taste of tobacco, making it easier to get hooked on nicotine.¹⁰ • Most youth use flavored e-cigarette products, including mint and menthol.¹¹
Flavors are not just for kids; adults also like flavors in electronic cigarettes and it helps adults quit smoking cigarettes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-cigarettes are not FDA approved cessation devices. • Menthol cigarettes may actually be more difficult to quit than traditional, flavorless tobacco.¹² • If e-cigarettes were truly only for cessation (and not just a replacement smoking device), it wouldn’t need to come in flavors that entice new smokers and young people. • Allowing harmful flavored tobacco products, which are proven to encourage

⁸ Ambrose, BK, et al. (2015). "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12 – 17 Years, 2013 – 2014," JAMA, 314 (17):1871-1873.

⁹ ibid.

¹⁰ U.S. Food and Drug Administration. How Cigarettes are Made and How You Can Make a Plan to Quit. Retrieved from <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/products-ingredients-components/how-cigarettes-are-made-and-how-you-can-make-plan-quit>

¹¹ National Youth Tobacco Survey. (2018). Youth and Tobacco Use Facts from CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm

¹² U.S. Food and Drug Administration Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee. (2011). Menthol Cigarettes and Public Health: Review of the Scientific Evidence and Recommendations. <https://wayback.archive-it.org/7993/20170405201731/https://www.fda.gov/downloads/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/TobaccoProductsScientificAdvisoryCommittee/UCM269697.pdf>; Villanti AC, Collins LK, Niaura RS, Gagopian SY, Abrams DB. (2017). Menthol cigarettes and the public health standard: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health*, 17:983. <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-017-4987-z>

	initiation of youth tobacco use, to stay on the market in the hope that adults will use them to quit smoking cigarettes is not a defensible public health strategy.
Mint and menthol e-cigarette flavors are favored by quitters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are also flavors favored by youth.
Black/African American communities will be impacted by full flavor bans because of menthol cigarettes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> African-American smokers predominantly use menthol cigarettes. Nearly 9 in 10 African-American smokers (88.5%) aged 12 and older use menthol cigarettes.¹³ The tobacco industry intentionally and successfully targeted Black communities with intensive menthol cigarette marketing in the latter half of the 20th century and lobbied for menthol to be excluded from the FDA's cigarette flavor ban in 2009. NAACP unanimous resolution supporting flavor bans on all tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes: <p style="padding-left: 2em;">“The NAACP is pleased to hear of the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) plan to ban the sale of menthol cigarettes and restrict the sale of flavored e-cigarettes. For decades, data have shown that the tobacco industry has successfully and intentionally marketed mentholated cigarettes to African Americans and particularly African American women as “replacement smokers; that menthol smokers have a harder time quitting smoking; and that tobacco use is a major contributor to heart disease, cancer, and stroke – three leading causes of death among African Americans. The recognition of this harsh reality led the NAACP to adopt a unanimous resolution at our 2016 National Convention supporting state and local policy efforts to restrict the sale of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products, as well as advocating for the FDA’s careful oversight and review of all tobacco products. “The proposed measure by the FDA is long overdue to protect the health of African Americans and to reduce the deleterious impact of menthol smoking and tobacco use overall on America’s health,” Marjorie Innocent, NAACP Senior Director of Health Programs.¹⁴</p>
“Research shows that of the black adults who choose to smoke, nearly 80% prefer menthol cigarettes — this	Banning the sale of menthol flavored tobacco products DOES NOT criminalize the menthol smoker – it is only prohibiting the sale, not possession – and the tobacco industry knows that.

¹³ Giovino GA, Villanti AC, Mowery PD et al. (2013). Differential Trends in Cigarette Smoking in the USA: Is Menthol Slowing Progress? *Tobacco Control*, 24(1). <https://tobaccocontrol.bmjjournals.org/content/24/1/28>

¹⁴ NAACP 2016 resolutions, starting on p. 41: <http://www.naacp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Resolutions.2016.pdf>

includes black smokers in Colorado. A ban on menthol cigarettes can put a selective target on black smokers and essentially add fuel to a police accountability fire that continues to burn on a daily basis.”	
Allow exemption for “adult-only” locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Adult-only” locations are allowed to use self-service displays for tobacco products and are responsible for barring minors from entering the store. This is like asking the fox to guard the hen house. Adult-only tobacco stores have been receiving FDA warning letters regarding a failure to ensure that no minors enter the store, and for failure to have a staff member checking IDs at the door. • Restricting product availability helps to de-normalize tobacco use, decreases exposure to tobacco industry point of sale marketing and increases the success of quit attempts.¹⁵
Alcohol is offered in flavors too. Should we just get rid of all flavored products? Where does it stop?	Alcohol is not the topic and there is evidence to support that flavored tobacco is used to addict youth.

Mental Illness and Nicotine Use	
Opposition Message	The Facts
Nicotine helps with my mental illness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with mental illness smoke at two to four times the rate of the general population.¹⁶ • Smoking is believed to be more prevalent among people with depression and schizophrenia because nicotine may temporarily lessen the symptoms of these

¹⁵ Restricting Product Availability, Counter Tobacco <https://countertobacco.org/policy/restricting-product-availability/>

¹⁶ Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. *Behavioral Health Trends in the United States: Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. Rockville (MD): SAMHSA; 2015. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FRR1-2014/NSDUH-FRR1-2014.pdf>. Accessed September 14, 2017.

	illnesses, such as poor concentration, low mood, and stress. ^{17,18,19} But it is important to note that smoking cessation has been linked with improved mental health—including reduced depression, anxiety, and stress, and enhanced mood and quality of life. ²⁰
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We Need to Do Education Instead

Opposition Message	The Facts
Parents need to do a better job/education is the answer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We all have a role to play in this. Schools, parents, health departments, and public officials should use a comprehensive approach to protecting young people from the predatory practices of the tobacco industry. While education is key, public policy works; it is one of the most effective strategies to reducing rates of tobacco use among young people. In 2016, the tobacco industry spent \$9.5 billion dollars marketing their products.²¹ Parents are doing the best they can, but they cannot single handedly push back against a billion-dollar industry that seeks to hook their kids.

Online Sales

Opposition Message	The Facts
Flavored tobacco users will simply order products online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online sales are only a part of the issue, and we have to start by fixing these issues in our own backyard. There are entities exploring ways to combat online sales as well.

¹⁷ Aubin H-J, Rollema H, Svensson TH, Winterer G. Smoking, quitting, and psychiatric disease: a review. *Neurosci Biobehav Rev*. 2012;36(1):271-284. doi:10.1016/j.neubiorev.2011.06.007.

¹⁸ Minichino A, Bersani FS, Calò WK, et al. Smoking behaviour and mental health disorders—mutual influences and implications for therapy. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2013;10(10):4790-4811. doi:10.3390/ijerph10104790.

¹⁹ Wing VC, Wass CE, Soh DW, George TP. A review of neurobiological vulnerability factors and treatment implications for comorbid tobacco dependence in schizophrenia. *Ann N Y Acad Sci*. 2012;1248:89-106. doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.2011.06261.x.

²⁰ Taylor G, McNeill A, Girling A, Farley A, Lindson-Hawley N, Aveyard P. Change in mental health after smoking cessation: systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ*. 2014;348:g1151.

²¹ Federal Trade Commission. (2018). Federal Trade Commission Cigarette Report for 2016. Washington: Federal Trade Commission. https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/federal-trade-commission-cigarette-report-2016-federal-trade-commission-smokeless-tobacco-report/ftc_cigarette_report_for_2016_0.pdf

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although many users have the ability to purchase e-cigarettes online, the 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey found that middle and high school e-cigarette users under 18 obtain e-cigarettes from vape shops and gas stations or convenience stores.²²
Kids are buying online/How will you regulate online sales?	Some communities have passed policies to restrict online sales but are having difficulty with enforcement. The existence of online sales does not negate the importance of policy to address local illegal sales.

Black Market

<i>Opposition Message</i>	<i>The Facts</i>
Policy initiatives from MLSA 21 to Flavor Bans will create a black market.	There are major problems with this industry-funded argument. When compared with independent sources, they consistently overestimate the scale of illicit tobacco. They also frequently fail to meet the quality and transparency standards of peer-reviewed research. This raises fresh questions about an industry that has a long history of using research and obfuscation to deceive policymakers and the public – not to mention an intimate involvement with the tobacco smuggling it now claims it helps to prevent.

²² Food and Drug Administration. (2019). Modifications to Compliance Policy for Certain Deemed Tobacco Products. <https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/modifications-compliance-policy-certain-deemed-tobacco-products>

<p>Below is what RMSFA advocates for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual license fees for vaping stores. • Smoke free zones that do not include vaping stores. • Preventing minors from entering the store. • Allowing vaping flavor products to be purchased by adults. • Mandated ID scanners to prevent minors from using fake ID's. • Limiting number of products sold per person to prevent and reduce minor vaping product distribution. • Excessive fines for any vaping store who sells vaping products to minors 	<p>Excerpts of a Letter Sent to a Colorado Town from NATO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving business to surrounding communities that do not have the same tobacco restrictions. • Providing surrounding businesses an unfair competitive advantage by banning my business from selling the products adult consumers desire. • Providing surrounding businesses an unfair competitive advantage by forcing us to sell our products at a higher price. • Forcing police departments to regulate a new tobacco ordinance while issues with opioid abuse and homicide continue to plague the U.S. • Opening up an opportunity for criminals to sell banned tobacco products illegally on the black market, which can result in an increase in crime, violence and youth access to tobacco products. • These ordinances limit the freedoms and choices of legal adults who can get married, serve our country and vote for leaders, such as yourself. • We do not sell tobacco to minors. In fact, our staff goes through extensive training to keep tobacco products away from underage individuals. • We are doing our part to keep tobacco out of the hands of our community's youth by not selling to minors. I am in favor of any laws that will keep children from using tobacco, but I can't support an ordinance that doesn't support my livelihood.
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Op-eds during Boulder Campaign

Opinion: Art Way: Why the Boulder City Council should vote no on a menthol ban

By DAILY CAMERA GUEST OPINION | openforum@dailycamera.com | Boulder Daily Camera

August 27, 2019 at 4:58 pm

By Art Way

As a former police accountability advocate and drug policy reformer, immediate concerns come to mind when hearing Boulder City Council is considering a ban on flavored tobacco. I'll explain why that concern is amplified if menthol and menthol cigarettes are included within the ban. Regarding flavors within the vaping space that have found traction among young people, the idea is far less problematic.

Vaping is a fairly novel public health concern, where early intervention against potentially targeting youth via certain flavors is warranted. Moreover, data shows vaping can have the potential to cause actual smoking in young adults, whereas data as to adults generally reveal vaping as a promising cessation tool. That said, the argument aimed at eliminating flavors such as bubble gum on behalf of youth holds less weight in theory and in practice if menthol is included as a banned flavor. This is because menthol is a well-established and popular adult-use flavor.

As a state known for its independent political streak, we know that simply prohibiting adults from popular substances or activities runs the risk of inherent unintended consequences. Such efforts have the ability to become shallow and superfluous in regards to their original intent. An immediate illicit market of some kind will result, opening the door for a whole new set of problems that police would inevitably have to address. We've seen how the prohibition of marijuana possession and use among adults essentially became a joke that even many police grew weary of enforcing.

Moreover, we simply don't need another reason for police/civilian interactions that can have life-threatening or life-altering results. This is especially so for black and brown communities, as the tragic murder of Eric Garner has proven. Research shows that of the black adults who choose to smoke, nearly 80% prefer menthol cigarettes — this includes black smokers in Colorado. A ban on menthol cigarettes can put a selective target on black smokers and essentially add fuel to a police accountability fire that continues to burn on a daily basis. The Boulder Police Department have just recently proven they aren't immune to this problem.

Colorado is showing an ability and willingness to address potential public health concerns via aggressive public health efforts as opposed to an overreliance on law enforcement. We should consider leaving knee-jerk policies aimed to provide political wins, despite the societal

consequences, to elected officials elsewhere. Although flavor bans as a whole are questionable, to include menthol and especially menthol cigarettes is a problem just waiting to happen.

I urge members of the Boulder City Council to thoughtfully consider those Boulderites who are going to be most affected by a menthol cigarette ban and who have always borne the brunt of inequity.

Art Way is former Colorado state director for Drug Policy Alliance and founder of Equitable Consulting.

Opinion: Terri Richardson: The truth about why a menthol ban is critical

By DAILY CAMERA GUEST OPINION | openforum@dailycamera.com | Boulder Daily Camera

September 5, 2019 at 3:40 pm

By Terri Richardson

As a physician who sees the ravages of tobacco use, I read with interest Art Way's recent op-ed in the Camera, "Why the Boulder City Council should vote no on a menthol ban."

Way's opinion piece attempted to convince readers that banning the sale of menthol tobacco products would harm black adults and could even lead to law enforcement targeting black adults, since more than 80% of black adult smokers choose menthol cigarettes. His opinion piece ignores the tobacco companies' own secret documents, the science on menthol and its impact on use, as well as past and present data on menthol use.

Menthol is harming our kids and communities — and the black community is being harmed the most.

Menthol has been a key flavor in addicting children, particularly black youth and adults. Menthol makes it more difficult to quit. So, smokers continue to smoke these cancer sticks despite knowing the harm, and the tobacco companies keep going to the bank.

One secret tobacco industry document in reference to Newport cigarettes (a leading menthol brand) said, "Our profile taken locally shows this brand being purchased by black people (all ages), young adults (usually college age), but the base of our business is the high school student." Is that the legacy we want to leave this generation?

Two comprehensive scientific reports from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and a scientific advisory committee were clear — menthol helps to addict youth, makes it harder to quit, and poses a risk above that of non-menthol cigarettes. And tobacco companies know that banning the sale of flavored tobacco products does not penalize an adult for possessing a flavored product (they will not be fined, arrested, or go to jail) — stores just cannot sell them.

More than 80% of black youth smokers are using a menthol cigarette. And the newest data on e-cigarettes (vaping) shows almost 70% of high school e-cigarette users are using a flavored e-cigarette, with half of those choosing to use a menthol or mint flavored e-cigarette — accident? Of course not.

Don't believe the tobacco industry smokescreen. The truth is that banning the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol, will save lives. We are about preserving health and saving lives.