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Tobacco 21 Law Takes Effect September 1, 2019

MONTPELIER, VT – August 26, 2019

On May 16th, Governor Phil Scott signed legislation making Vermont the 14th U.S. state to raise the age of sale for tobacco products to 21. The law known as Tobacco 21 will make it “*illegal to sell or furnish tobacco products, tobacco paraphernalia, or tobacco substitutes to any person under 21 years of age*”. The Tobacco 21 law takes effect on September 1. Scott also signed another law that prohibits the online sale of e-cigarettes to Vermont consumers which took effect July 1.

This bill was introduced by Senators Virginia Lyons and Deborah Ingram after U.S. Surgeon General Vice Adm. Jerome M. Adams issued an advisory in December 2018 stressing the importance of protecting children from a lifetime of nicotine addiction and associated health risks by immediately addressing the epidemic of youth e-cigarette use.

E-cigarette use among youth has skyrocketed in the past year at a rate of epidemic proportions. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration’s National Youth Tobacco Survey, the percentage of high school-age children reporting past 30-day use of e-cigarettes rose by more than 75 percent between 2017 and 2018. Use among middle school-age children also increased nearly 50 percent.

Data from National Institutes of Health’s Monitoring the Future survey also shows that America’s teens reported a dramatic increase in their use of e-cigarettes in just a single year, with 37.3 percent of 12th graders reporting use in the past 12 months, compared to 27.8 percent in 2017.

“We need to protect our kids from all tobacco products, including all shapes and sizes of e-cigarettes,” said Adams. “Everyone can play an important role in protecting our nation’s young people from the risks of e-cigarettes.”

There are currently 13 other states with a tobacco 21 law: Arkansas, California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Utah, Virginia and Washington.

About the Vermont Department of Liquor and Lottery, Division of Liquor Control (DLC)

The mission of the Vermont Department of Liquor Control is to serve the public by encouraging responsible consumption and preventing the misuse of beverage alcohol and tobacco through the controlled distribution, education and licensing of sellers, as well as the wise use of enforcement. The Department works to provide excellent customer service in conjunction with our Agency Partners to operate efficient, convenient, and profitable liquor stores. All profits from the Department’s operations are contributed to the State of Vermont’s General Fund with over \$300,000,000 being contributed since 2000.