

RCW 70.155.005 Legislative findings. (1) The legislature finds that chapter 15, Laws of 2019 furthers the public health, safety, and welfare by reducing youth access to addictive and harmful products.

(2) While present state law prohibits the sale and distribution of tobacco and vapor products to youth under the age of eighteen, youth obtain these products with ease.

(3) The legislature recognizes that many people who purchase cigarettes for minors are between the ages of eighteen to twenty. By decreasing the number of eligible buyers in high school, raising the minimum legal age to sell tobacco and vapor products will decrease the access of students to tobacco products. According to the 2014 healthy youth survey, forty-one percent of tenth graders say it is "sort of easy" to "very easy" to get cigarettes. Nationally, among youth who smoke, more than twice as many get their cigarettes from social sources than from a store or vending machine.

(4) The legislature recognizes that ninety-five percent of smokers start by the age of twenty-one.

(5) The legislature recognizes that jurisdictions across the country are increasing the age of sale for tobacco products to twenty-one. As of October 2018, six states (California, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Oregon), the District of Columbia, the territory of Guam, and more than three hundred fifty cities and counties in twenty-one states have raised the minimum legal sales age to twenty-one. Approximately thirty percent of the population of the United States is covered by such a policy.

(6) The legislature recognizes the scientific report issued by the national institute of medicine, one of the most prestigious scientific authorities in the United States, which predicted that increasing the age of sale for tobacco products in the United States to twenty-one will significantly reduce the number of adolescents and young adults who start smoking, reduce deaths from smoking, and immediately improve the health of adolescents, young adults, young mothers, and their children.

(7) The legislature recognizes the national institute of medicine report predicted increasing the tobacco sale age will make the greatest difference among those ages fifteen to seventeen, who will no longer be able to pass for legal age and will have a harder time getting tobacco products from older classmates and friends. The national institute of medicine report also predicted raising the minimum age for the sale of tobacco products in the United States to twenty-one will, over time, reduce the smoking rate by about twelve percent and smoking-related deaths by ten percent.

(8) The legislature recognizes scientific study of the brain is increasingly showing that the brain continues to be highly vulnerable to addictive substances until age twenty-five. Nicotine adversely affects the development of the cerebral cortex and hippocampus in adolescents.

(9) The legislature recognizes that a strategy of increasing the minimum legal age for alcohol was highly successful in reducing adverse effects of alcohol consumption. A national drinking age of twenty-one resulted in reduced alcohol consumption among youth, decreased alcohol dependence, and has led to significant reductions in drunk driving fatalities.

(10) The legislature recognizes that if the age of sale is raised to twenty-one, eighteen to twenty year olds will likely substitute other in-store purchases for cigarettes. The legislature recognizes

that when Needham, Massachusetts raised the smoking age to twenty-one in 2005, no convenience stores went out of business.

(11) The legislature recognizes that reducing the youth smoking rate will save lives and reduce health care costs. Every year, two billion eight hundred ten million dollars in health care costs can be directly attributed to tobacco use in Washington. Smoking-caused government expenditures cost every Washington household eight hundred twenty-one dollars per year.

(12) Federal law requires states to enforce laws prohibiting sale and distribution of tobacco products to minors in a manner that can reasonably be expected to reduce the extent to which the products are available to minors. It is imperative to effectively reduce the sale, distribution, and availability of tobacco products to minors. [2019 c 15 s 2; 1993 c 507 s 1.]

Effective date—2019 c 15: See note following RCW 26.28.080.

Minors and tobacco: RCW 26.28.080.

Raising the minimum legal age of sale in certain compacts, consultations with federally recognized Indian tribes: RCW 43.06.468.

Taxation: Chapters 82.24 and 82.26 RCW.

Tobacco on school grounds: RCW 28A.210.310.