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## **Oakland Restricts Sale of Menthol Cigarettes and Flavored Tobacco *Contra Costa Supervisors Also Finalize Flavored Tobacco Restrictions Today***

**Oakland, CA – July 18, 2017**— Leading health organizations and community groups today applauded the Oakland City Council’s unanimous approval of new safeguards to keep flavored tobacco products – including menthol-flavored cigarettes – from youth. A final vote on the new measure is expected in September after which the new law would go into effect mid-2018.

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors also finalized restrictions today on the sale of flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and menthol cigarettes, in unincorporated areas of the county within 1,000 feet of youth-sensitive places such as parks and schools.

“Flavored tobacco products – including menthol cigarettes and candy – are a key part of the industry’s strategy to bait youth, particularly youth of color, into becoming tomorrow’s addicted users. The American Heart Association strongly supports the Oakland City Council’s decision to protect our community’s health and wellbeing from these profit-driven practices,” said Alden McDonald III, MD, President of the Board for the Greater Bay Area Division of the American Heart Association and Oakland resident.

According to a government study, 81 percent of kids who have ever tried tobacco started with a flavored product and 80 percent of current youth tobacco users had used a flavored tobacco product in the past month.

“Among the most serious challenges, tobacco companies have aggressively marketed menthol-flavored tobacco products to African Americans, often targeting youth,” said Carol McGruder, Co-Chair of the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council. “For too long the tobacco industry has successfully blocked our community from meaningful engagement in public health policy that addresses the needs of our community. We are so proud to see the phenomenal leadership of our Black elected officials as they stand up for our youth.”

The anesthetizing effect of menthol makes the smoke easier to inhale and masks the harsh taste of tobacco, making it more appealing to new users. A report by the Food and Drug Administration found that those who begin smoking menthol cigarettes are more likely to progress to a regular smoking habit and have a higher level of nicotine dependence than those who begin with non-menthol cigarettes.

“The destructive impact on the African-American community is clear as African Americans smoke menthol cigarettes at very high rates and quit smoking at lower rates, and African-American men have notably high death rates from lung cancer,” said Cassie Ray, Bay Area government relations director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.



Meanwhile, young smokers are also more likely to use menthol cigarettes than other age groups. More than half (54 percent) of youth smokers ages 12-17 use menthol cigarettes compared with fewer than one-third of smokers 35 and older. Among African-American youth, menthol use is even higher: seven out of 10 African-American youth smokers smoke menthol cigarettes.

Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products is an issue of both health and social justice. Young menthol cigarette smokers are disproportionately African American, Asian American, LGBT and from low-income communities already significantly impacted by tobacco-related disease.

“We should do everything we can to protect young people from tobacco addiction,” said Vanessa Marvin, Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy for the American Lung Association in California. “Restricting the sale of menthol and other flavored tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes, so kids don’t have easy access will reduce teen use and ultimately save lives.”

San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee signed into law the most comprehensive flavored tobacco restrictions in the country on July 7th after the Board of Supervisors heard compelling evidence that the tobacco industry markets flavored products as “starter kits” to trigger a lifetime addiction in youth and minorities.

“It is no surprise that Big Tobacco is now pushing back with a greedy attempt to qualify a referendum to undo the historic public health strides made by San Francisco leadership,” said Bob Gordon, Co-Chair of the San Francisco Tobacco-Free Coalition. “Make no mistake—the tobacco industry cannot survive without seducing a new generation- they have one goal in mind and that is to lure young tobacco users into a lifelong addiction. The industry shamelessly tries to maximize profits while its customers suffer death and disease, and local taxpayers continue to foot the bill for tobacco-related illnesses.”

Tobacco use is responsible for one-third of the cancer deaths in this country and causes nearly half a million deaths annually from all tobacco-related illnesses including heart and lung disease.

“Working with people battling lung disease every day, we know how painful, isolating, and hopeless many people feel when they are struggling with tobacco addiction and tobacco-related disease,” said Dr. Tanya Stevenson, President & CEO of Breathe California. “We also know how agonizing it is to watch people you love struggle with oxygen tanks, tests, treatments, and surgeries—all due to tobacco use.”

The *No More Flavored Tobacco* coalition comprises the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, Breathe California, and Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund. The group has launched an educational [website](#) to inform the Bay Area about what’s at stake if flavored tobacco products aren’t reined in. Featured on the website is the [report](#) “*The Flavor Trap: How Tobacco Companies Are Luring Kids with Candy-Flavored E-Cigarettes and Cigars*” that details the dangers of flavored tobacco and how it is being marketed to hook the next generation to a potential lifetime nicotine addiction.

Learn more at [www.NoMoreFlavoredTobacco.org](http://www.NoMoreFlavoredTobacco.org).



**About American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network**

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society. ACS CAN supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit <http://www.acscan.org/>.

**About American Heart Association and American Stroke Association**

The American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association are devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – the two leading causes of death in the world. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The American Heart Association is the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association. To learn more or to get involved, call 1-800-AHA-USA1, visit [heart.org](http://heart.org) or call any of our offices around the country. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

**About the American Lung Association in California**

The American Lung Association in California is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through research, education and advocacy. The Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer, to improve the air we breathe, to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families, and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases. For more information about the American Lung Association in California or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-685-4872) or visit [www.lung.org/california](http://www.lung.org/california)

**About the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund**

The mission of the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund is to improve health and save lives by reducing tobacco use, the number one cause of preventable death in the United States and around the world. We mount education, advocacy and electoral campaigns in support of public policies that prevent kids from smoking, help smokers quit and protect everyone from secondhand smoke.

**About Breathe California**

Through grassroots education, advocacy and services, Breathe California fights lung disease, advocates for clean air and advances public health in our local communities. Since 1908, we have addressed the most serious health threats of our time through grassroots programs that empower individual, institutional and community change for better breathing and healthier living. We have local offices in San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, Monterey and Sacramento. Visit us: [www.breathecalifornia.org](http://www.breathecalifornia.org)

**About Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights**

Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights is the leading national lobbying organization (501 (c) 4), dedicated since 1976 to nonsmokers' rights, taking on the tobacco industry at all levels of government, protecting nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke, and preventing tobacco addiction among youth. ANR pursues an action-oriented program of policy and legislation. Visit <http://www.no-smoke.org/>.

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