

TALKING POINTS

Retailer Licensing

The tobacco industry is spending big bucks to convince the public that its programs are the best way to stop illegal cigarette sales to children. Allowing the tobacco industry to police itself is a deadly, dangerous joke. We need a serious program with real enforcement to prevent illegal tobacco sales.

Tobacco kills 400,000 Americans a year, and in California no one is even sure who sells it. Almost half of the nation's states (24) require a license to sell tobacco with strict penalties for selling tobacco to minors, but California does not.

Some communities think the idea of relying on the tobacco industry to police itself is a deadly, dangerous joke. They want serious programs with real enforcement. In California, 24 local communities require tobacco retailers to be licensed.

Licensing is a simple and appropriate way for the community to address this problem. It is a common sense solution to prevent our youth from embarking on a life-long addiction and to help solve this public health crisis.

- Policies that require a license or permit to sell tobacco products are necessary, common sense steps to combat teen smoking.
- Tobacco is the only addictive (and potentially deadly) product that can be sold without a license.
- California requires a license to sell many other products such as prescription drugs and alcohol, but cigarettes—a deadly, addictive product—can be sold in California without one.
- When part of a comprehensive and coordinated tobacco control program, licensing and related enforcement are very cost-effective measures for saving lives (up to 1,000 times as cost-effective as mammography), according to leading researchers in the area of youth access.
- Licensing is essential to identify all tobacco retailers. The sale of tobacco products is not limited to markets and gas stations. They can be purchased at a large variety of businesses including doughnut shops, coffee houses, ice cream trucks and canteen trucks, which kids may frequent but which are not usually subject to routine enforcement activities.
- Shouldn't California communities license retailers to make sure they are not selling a lethal product and a lifelong addiction to our kids?



Requiring a license to sell tobacco products sends the message to all tobacco retailers that our community is serious about protecting kids from this deadly addiction.

Business owners must follow the law. It is that simple. If you sell tobacco, it is your responsibility to verify the purchaser is at least 18. If you do not, you lose your license. If you do, you have nothing to worry about.

- Licensing is a common-sense approach that will ensure that retailers operate legally, ethically and responsibly when it comes to preventing illegal tobacco sales to kids.
- The threat of license suspension and revocation is significant motivation for compliance with tobacco laws.
- Licensing is a way to treat all retailers fairly. Only retailers who violate the law will face consequences such as license suspension or revocation.
- It is important that local governments have the ability to protect their young residents by implementing laws that go beyond the requirements of any state law. In the past, the tobacco industry has supported preemption language in state law to establish weak requirements that cannot be enhanced at the local level.