



## **New Jersey Contemplates Raising Smoking Age to 21**

The bill is now before the governor.

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TRENTON, N.J. – New Jersey lawmakers have passed a proposal to increase the state’s legal smoking age from 19 to 21, the [Press of Atlantic City](#) reports. The Assembly approved the measure on Monday, while the Senate okayed the change in 2014. Gov. Chris Christie now has the bill on his desk. A decade ago, New Jersey changed the smoking age from 18 to 19.

“Not one person will stop smoking,” said Sal Risalvato, director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience Store and Automotive Association. The association was against increasing the age to 21. Risalvato would rather see lawmakers focused on underage smokers, not retailers.

“It hurts us because 3% of tobacco-users fall in that age category,” Risalvato said. “If 3% of people are not coming into the store, you lose all kinds of sales. Convenience stores are mostly impulse buys. I only make 40 cents on a pack of cigarettes, but now I will lose out on the \$1.50 from the cup of coffee the person decided to buy while getting the cigarettes.”

The New Jersey Office of Legislative Services estimates that the state would lose \$18.8 million in tax revenue annually. Meanwhile, [10 U.S. senators](#) have introduced legislation on the national level (and [Pennsylvania](#) is considering statewide legislation) to raise the tobacco buying age to 21. Hawaii’s law went into effect January 1 and is the first statewide measure to set the minimum age for tobacco purchases at 21. New York City also forbids the selling of tobacco products to those under 21. Three other states have set the minimum age for tobacco purchases at 19: Alabama, Alaska and Utah.