

Times of Trenton Letters to the Editor - May 25



Cigarettes for sale in a file photo. (AP photo)

By Times of Trenton Letters to the Editor
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Tobacco bill imposes undue burden on shops

Last Monday, Sen. Richard Codey (D-Livingston) proposed raising the legal age to purchase tobacco from 19 to 21 years. I consider Sen. Codey a respected statesman and gifted legislator whose dedication and commitment to improving public and mental health is unsurpassed. However, I cannot support yet another radical proposal infringing upon the rights and freedoms of adults in New Jersey, especially one denying adults the ability to purchase legal products while placing additional burdens on small businesses.

This legislation would require convenience stores to police their customers to ensure the law is upheld. Our members have consistently partnered with legislators and local law enforcement to comply with rules and regulations aimed at taking dangerous, mind-altering bath salts and synthetic marijuana off the streets, but this proposal burdens small-business owners who make a living selling coffee, drinks, snacks and newspapers, which accompany tobacco purchases.

Further, Sen. Codey's bill proposes only penalties for the seller, not the purchaser. As a matter of personal responsibility and individual accountability, if one attempts to manipulate a store clerk into unlawfully dispensing tobacco, that individual should also be responsible for his or her actions.

It is the right of every adult consumer to decide which products to indulge in and which to abstain from. Only through education and awareness can tobacco use be combated. Failing that, it won't matter if the legal age to purchase tobacco is 21, 25 or 30 — adults have a right to make choices without Statehouse interference.

If young men and women can vote, get married, serve in the armed forces and be legally adult members of society at 18, there is no reason to delay their decision to purchase or not purchase tobacco products until 21 years of age.

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