

NJ.Com

Highland Park may raise age for buying cigarettes to 21

By **Brian Amaral | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com**

on March 06, 2015 at 6:43 AM, updated March 06, 2015 at 6:51 AM

HIGHLAND PARK — Borough officials are considering raising the age to legally buy cigarettes to 21, joining several other New Jersey towns.

"I support this because I think it'll protect our youth and the health of our community," said Councilman Joshua Fine, who is leading the effort.

The ordinance would require prominent signage in stores that sell cigarettes informing them of the local law, as well as training for store employees. In New Jersey, people may legally buy cigarettes at the age of 19. State lawmakers have considered raising the age to 21, and more than two-thirds of Americans **support doing so, according to one poll.**

The measure in Highland Park follows national trends, including more than 30 towns in Massachusetts, part of Hawaii and New York City, **according to Reuters.** In New Jersey, **Princeton is considering raising the smoking age**, and Sayreville, Englewood and Teaneck have already done so.

Proponents of the measure say that it will protect future generations from adverse health risks. The local Board of Health recommended the new law at a meeting in February.

Under the proposal, merchants who sell cigarettes to people

under 21 would face fines.

Statistics show that nine out of 10 smokers started before the age of 21, according to Councilman Fine.

Gayle Brill Mittler, the mayor of Highland Park, said she also supports it. She has also asked Main Street Highland Park to weigh in. The organization represents the interests of merchants, which could be affected by the proposal.

"I think the council reflects basically some of what the residents are saying," Brill Mittler said. "However, what the council members want to know is, how will this impact the retailers in town that are selling cigarettes?"

The borough council will likely vote on the proposal March 17.

Brian Amaral may be reached at bamaral@njadvancemedia.com. Follow him on Twitter @bamaral44. Find NJ.com on Facebook.

http://www.nj.com/middlesex/index.ssf/2015/03/highland_park_considers_raising_the_age_to_buy_cig.html