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City raises age to buy tobacco products in Garfield

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Garfield is the sixth municipality in New Jersey to raise the legal age to purchase cigarettes and tobacco products from 19 to 21.

The council adopted the ordinance at its April 14 meeting. Global Advisors on Smoke-Free Policy (GASP) gave a presentation to the Garfield Council last month about the benefits of raising the age. GASP tracks ordinances to raise the cigarette and tobacco products age to 21 and provides towns with educational resources to pass them.

"We are delighted that Garfield is a leader when it comes to helping its youth and young adults not to smoke," GASP Executive Director Karen Blumenfeld said. "We thank them very much for their leadership."

The current legal age is 19 but some municipalities have been raising that number. In New Jersey, Bogota, Englewood, Sayreville and Teaneck have raised the legal age to 21 to buy cigarettes and tobacco products. Highland Park also raised its legal age to 21 the same night as Garfield.

Blumenfeld said 90 percent of smokers start before the age of 21.

"Garfield has been a leader on tobacco control," she previously said.

In 2013, the city passed an ordinance making all city parks and facilities smoke free and in 2014 designated all tobacco retail establishments to a business zone on Route 46 and restricted them from opening within 1,000 feet of a school or church.

Representatives from the Garfield Prevention Coalition, an initiative of the Center for Drug and Alcohol Resources and a program of Children's Aid & Family Resources, have showed their support for the

ordinance. Garfield High School students and members of community group Empowered Peers Inspiring Change (EPIC) also spoke on the importance of raising the age. The students said they are worried about how cigarettes are so obtainable to minors.

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