

News10

Advocates push to include e-cigarettes in NY Clean Indoor Air Act

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ALBANY, N.Y. (NEWS10) — Two lawmakers are pushing a law that would ban electronic cigarettes in places where traditional cigarettes are banned. Assembly member Linda Rosenthal and Sen. Kemp Hannon are trying to make e-cigarettes subject to the state's Clean Indoor Air Act, which would ban them in workplaces, restaurants and bars.

"Just imagine if I pulled out an e-cigarette right now," she said during a meeting on Wednesday. "So we have two pregnant women here." Those pushing for the law said it would protect people from second hand nicotine exposure as well as exposure to other potentially dangerous chemicals in e-cigarettes.

The product is fairly new, and health officials are unsure of their long-term health effects.

Michael Seilback of the American Lung Association says e-cigarette vapor is not completely safe.

"Over time your eyes are going to start to itch, your throat is going to start to itch, you may feel tightness in your chest," he said. "So we know there are absolutely health effects."

But it's not just the second hand smoke health advocates are fighting. It's also the third hand smoke.

The Cancer Action Network says e-cigarette vapor leaves a nicotine residue on indoor surfaces, which health professionals said could linger for days, weeks or months.

"If you could imagine a child, so say an infant crawling on that floor or what's contaminated with the nicotine, they can get significant exposure that way as well," Dr. Mark Travers with the Roswell Park Cancer Institute

said.

But Bonnie Hudson from Smoker's Choice said they do their best to sell the best product.

"With anything new I don't think we know enough about them at this point, and we try hard to get the healthiest ones that we can find," she said.

While the bill would clear up gray areas, some restaurants said e-cigarettes have not been an issue.

"Most people that do smoke it do go outside," Tess Collins, co-owner of McGeary's Pub, said. "I find that people are very respectful."

That's what Eric Burke of Albany tries to be. He said e-cigarettes helped him quit traditional smoking, but he's still mindful of those around him. "You can't smoke cigarettes inside restaurants and bars, so why should these be any different?" he said.

The senate bill is already on the floor. The assembly version is in the Codes Committee and will then go to the floor.

There's only a few weeks left in the session, but Rosenthal wants it done this year.

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