

NJTV NEWS

Proposed Bill Aims To Make Smoking With Minors in Cars Punishable

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By Michael Hill, *Correspondent*

Some New Jerseyans unwaveringly condemn smoking with minors in the car.

“Secondhand smoke is worse than regular smoke. Plus like the kids are actually smoking a cigarette with you,” said Dwayne Petway.

On whether it’s not good enough to just let the window down and let the smoke go outside, Julie Gomes said, “No, cause I’m pretty sure all the smoke isn’t just going to fly out the window.”

“Smoking with minors, that’s just ridiculous. Whether they’re 16 years old or 3 years old,” said Angel Nives.

Their views are in step with a bill that just won unanimous approval in a Senate committee. One senator abstained over concerns of law invading someone’s privacy.

But under Sen. Joe Vitale’s bill, to cite someone for smoking with a minor in the car, police would have to stop the driver for some other traffic violation. Smokers could get a \$100 fine for lighting up with those 16 or younger in the car. It includes smokers of tobacco and electronic cigarettes and vapor products.

Vitale says it’s about protecting children. “It has a significant impact

immediately on their blood pressure, their circulation, the carcinogens that are in the air. It's just awful. So, driving is a privilege. It's not a right and we have to abide by any number of law enforcement rules in terms of and this is just another rule. We're not trying to vilify anyone," he said.

"It's an excellent idea because secondhand smoke is a class a carcinogen and there's no safe level. And usually young people, especially infants and toddlers have no way of communicating that they're being harmed by this and so it does make sense that cars do not contain secondhand smoke when children are present," said [Global Advisors Smokefree Policy](#) Executive Director Karen Blumenfeld.

"We think that it's going too far and that there's really no reason to include smoke free products," said [American Vaping Association](#) President Gregory Conley.

But Blumenfeld says the slippery slope for that started nearly a decade ago.

"It's not something new in New Jersey. In 2005, the state passed a regulation that requires all homes and cars where foster children are to be smoke-free," said Blumenfeld.

While the American tobacco lobby apparently was silent on opposing this bill at the senate hearing, the American Vaping Association is not.

"We see that as overkill. There is absolutely no evidence that the vapor produced by vapor products poses a threat to public health whether it's in a car, in a bar or in a house," said Conley. The Vaping Association contends vapor products actually are helping people quit smoking.

Other states have laws targeting smoking in cars with minors because supporters say the scientific evidence of harm is overwhelming.

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