

Asbury Park Press

Christie kills anti-smoking bill...

TRENTON

7:55 p.m. EST January 19, 2016

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Gov. Chris Christie vetoed 65 bills approved earlier this month by the lame-duck Legislature, including plans to boost the smoking age to 21....

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Legislation that would have raised the minimum age for buying cigarettes and electronic smoking devices from 19 to 21 had been passed 22-10 by the Senate in June 2014, then was passed 48-21 by the Assembly last week. Hawaii and more than 100 cities have set the smoking age at 21.

"Gov. Christie has spoken eloquently about addiction and his mother's battle with lung cancer following decades of cigarette smoking that started in her teens. Unfortunately, when given the opportunity to prevent future such tragedies, he failed to do so," said Matthew Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Sen. Richard Codey, D-Essex, a former governor, said he will pursue the smoking legislation again in the new session.

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Senate President Stephen Sweeney, D-Gloucester, said much of that legislation could begin anew in the new session but that so long as Christie remains governor, their fate probably wouldn't change.

"I would think that a lot of them would get reintroduced. The problem is if he's not going to sign them. But it doesn't mean we shouldn't do them because there will be another governor," Sweeney said,

"I've told my members this for the last several years: Don't just pass things when you're putting things up because he's the governor because if we're going to be, God willing, on our side if a Democrat wins, the bills that we've been passing, people are going to expect us to pass when it's a Democratic governor," Sweeney said. "So don't put something up that we don't intend to do when there's a Democratic governor."

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