

Chelsea Councilman Proposes Ban on Smokeless Tobacco at Sports Stadiums

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CHELSEA — A tradition as old as baseball itself could become a thing of the past at Citi Field and Yankee Stadium.

On Friday, Councilman Corey Johnson, whose district includes both Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen, introduced a bill aimed at banning the use of smokeless tobacco by both players and fans at New York City baseball stadiums.

"There may not be many baseball issues where Mets and Yankees fans can agree, but this certainly is one of them," Johnson, who chairs the Council's health committee, said in a statement. "By allowing smokeless tobacco at the ballparks, we are sending mixed signals about the dangers of tobacco use.

"It's time to take tobacco out of the game completely for the good of baseball and for the health of our kids and players alike," he added.

The bill — which follows recently passed legislation banning smokeless tobacco in stadiums in San Francisco, Boston and Los Angeles — would also prohibit the products from other New York sports arenas and recreation spaces, Johnson's statement said.

Although several Mets and Yankees players still use smokeless tobacco, the bill has garnered support from both organizations, Johnson said.

Baseball greats Tony Gwynn, who succumbed to salivary gland cancer in 2014, and Curt Schilling, who was treated for oral cancer a few years ago, both attributed their medical conditions to prolonged chewing tobacco use, the statement said. In 2013, the Centers for Disease Control reported 14.7 percent of high school boys said they used smokeless tobacco, the statement added.

"Today's action in New York will help achieve our goal of making the next generation tobacco-free," Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids president Matthew L. Myers said in a statement. "Our national pastime should be about promoting a healthy and active lifestyle, not a deadly and addictive product."

If approved, the ban could go into effect during the 2016 baseball season, Johnson's statement noted.

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