



Orange County Government
Office of the County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus
NEWS RELEASE

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Orange County Executive Neuhaus signs Tobacco 21 legislation

The County is the first County in the Hudson Valley to enact the law, which takes effect on June 1

Goshen, N.Y. – Orange County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus signed legislation on Friday to enact a law that would increase the minimum age for purchase of cigarettes and other tobacco products in Orange County from 18 to 21.

The Orange County Legislature unanimously approved the proposal in December of last year. Legislator James DiSalvo, R-Highland Falls, introduced the law a month earlier. DiSalvo’s father, Mike, a member of the American Heart Association’s Executive Leadership Team, represented him at the signing. Neuhaus was joined at the event by Legislator Barry Cheney, Deputy Commissioner of Health Chris Ericson and representatives from the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society and American Cancer Society Action Network, and the American Lung Association.

“I am pleased to take this proactive step toward keeping cigarettes out of the hands of young people,” Neuhaus said. “As County Executive, I want all Orange County residents to be healthy. As a parent of three, with another child on the way, I want to do all we can to reduce access to cigarettes.”

The Tobacco 21 law takes effect on June 1 of this year. Retailers who sell tobacco to someone under 21 could be fined \$300 to \$1,000 for a first offense and between \$500 and \$1,500 for further violations.

There are currently nine other counties in New York state where the minimum age for buying tobacco products is 21: Albany, Schenectady, Chautauqua, Suffolk and the five counties that make up New York City. In Onondaga and Nassau counties, the minimum age is 19. In all other New York counties the minimum age remains 18.

“We want all county residents to live longer, healthier, and more productive lives,” James DiSalvo said. “This measure will help to reduce Medicare and Medicaid tobacco related costs in the future. I am thankful this legislation received bipartisan support and appreciate everyone who assisted in getting this accomplished.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), if smoking continues at the current rate among youth in this country, 5.6 million of today’s Americans younger than 18 will die early from a smoking-related illness. Approximately nine out of 10 cigarette smokers first tried smoking by age 18. Each day in the U.S., according to the CDC, more than 3,200 youth aged 18 years or younger smoke their first cigarette, and an additional 2,100 youth and young adults become daily cigarette smokers.

“I am proud that the Orange County Legislature was able to produce this outstanding piece of legislation that will positively impact the health of our young people,” Chairman of the Legislature Steve Brescia said. “This legislation is proof of the good work we can do when we work together. I see this as a model of how we can advance serious, substantive legislation going forward.”

Added Commissioner of Health Dr. Eli Avila: “I am very happy that the County Executive and the Legislature have moved ahead with this law in Orange County. This is a proactive move in public health and another important step to keep our younger population from becoming addicted to tobacco products.”

For more information, contact Justin Rodriguez, Assistant to the County Executive for Communications and Media Relations at 845.291.3255 or jrodriguez@orangecountygov.com.

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Local organizations comment regarding County Executive Neuhaus's signing Tobacco 21 legislation

“As Director of the Tri-County Heart Walk for the American Heart Association and a resident of Orange County, I commend County Executive Neuhaus for signing Tobacco 21 as a way to improve the health of County residents, particularly our youth. By taking this leading role, we can prevent others from the lifelong health problems associated with picking up that first cigarette and protect others from preventable lung disease.” – **JoAnn Parker**, Hudson Valley Corporate Development Director, the American Heart Association.

“On behalf of the American Heart Association and Orange Regional Medical Center, we are thrilled that our County Leaders recognize this opportunity to help keep our community Heart Healthy, and to put safeguards in place to protect our teens from the influences of tobacco. I couldn't be happier that our County is taking this opportunity to lead the way in Heart Health.” – **Jonathan Schiller**, Chief Operating Officer, Orange Regional Medical Center, Chair of Tri-County Heart Walk.

“Ninety-five percent of all smokers begin smoking before the age of 21. Raising the minimum legal sale age to 21, along with other proven tobacco control strategies such as restricting tobacco marketing at the point of sale help to prevent youth tobacco use.” – **Maureen Kenney**, Director POW'R Against Tobacco, a program of the American Lung Association.

“Some 8,660 New York State residents will lose their lives to lung cancer this year. Research shows that if a person does not begin smoking at a young age, they are much less likely to ever smoke. Tobacco continues to claim too many lives and is the leading cause of preventable death. This law will not only save lives but will dramatically cut health care costs. I thank County Executive Neuhaus for enacting this public health measure.” – **Bill Sherman**, Vice-President Government Relations American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network .



County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus signed legislation on Friday to enact a law that would increase the minimum age for purchase of cigarettes and other tobacco products in Orange County from 18 to 21. He is joined by (from left to right) Meghan DuBois O'Connor, the POW'R Against Tobacco Program Manager for Orange County, JoAnn Parker, Hudson Valley Corporate Development Director, the American Heart Association, Orange County Legislator Barry Cheney, Anna Trocino, Senior Market Manager, Community Engagement, the American Cancer Society and American Cancer Society Action Network, American Heart Association Executive Director Kristin Judd, Orange County Deputy Health Commissioner Chris Ericson and Mike DiSalvo, a member of the American Cancer Society's Executive Leadership Team.