

In San Francisco, You Can Buy Cigarettes and Pot, But Not E-Cigs



By Alex Berezow, PhD — June 27, 2019



Credit: Dirk Beyer/Wikipedia [1]

It's difficult to predict what sort of nonsense is going to come out of San Francisco.

The city hosts the University of California-San Francisco (UCSF), which has become the [academic home for conspiracy theorists](#) [2], including [anti-GMOers and anti-vaxxers](#) [2]. It recently gave a platform to an [anti-biotech guest speaker](#) [3] whose organization receives funding from an organic food group that peddles "9/11 trutherism, chemtrails, and FEMA's secret plan to implement martial law."

Then, there's the city's failure to enforce basic sanitation. The problem became so bad that one frustrated citizen developed the app [SnapCrap](#) [4] which, as its name implies, allows users to snap pictures of, well, crap. There's also an [online map of feces](#) [5] in San Francisco's streets.

So, it shouldn't really be a surprise when a city that hasn't a clue about how to implement public health enacts a policy that will help kill people.

San Francisco Bans E-Cigarettes, But Not Actual Cigarettes

In its collective wisdom, the City of San Francisco just passed a ban on the sale of e-cigarettes because it wants to prevent teenagers from becoming addicted to nicotine. Actual cigarettes? Well, those are still for sale.

It is impossible to overstate how idiotic and counterproductive this policy is. Without a doubt, nicotine is a highly addictive substance, so e-cigarettes and other vaping devices do not belong in the hands of teens or kids. For that reason, sales and marketing of e-cigs should be strictly regulated the way, say, sales and marketing of alcohol are.

But prohibition makes absolutely no sense, particularly because data show that [vaping is an excellent way for smokers to quit](#) [6]. By banning the sale of e-cigs, then, San Francisco is indirectly facilitating the deaths of addicted smokers. The policy is utterly bonkers. (As you might have guessed, UCSF has an "expert" named Stanton Glantz who once said that [vapers would be better off smoking cigarettes](#) [7].)

In an interview with the [New York Times](#) [8], one of UCSF's sensible researchers, Dr. Steven Schroeder, expressed agreement with our position: "On the face of it, it's ludicrous that we would ban e-cigarettes, but permit the sale of tobacco and cannabis." He concluded that the e-cig ban was "dubious public health."

Dubious, indeed. Here is a list of things far more damaging to public health than nicotine that people can acquire legally in San Francisco:

- Actual cigarettes
- Hookah
- Marijuana
- Hypodermic needles (so drug addicts can "safely" inject heroin)

But vaping? No, that's too dangerous.

Monkey See, Monkey Do

There is one prediction worth making: Seattle often follows San Francisco's lead. Whatever boneheaded policy SF comes up with, Seattle is bound to mimic it. The local health department already tries to [scare smokers away from e-cigarettes](#) [9], so it's likely just a matter of time before Seattle bans them, too.

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Links

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco#/media/File:Golden_Gate_Bridge_1926.jpg

[2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/09/15/ucsf-academic-home-conspiracy-theorists-anti-vaxxers-13413>

[3] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/06/20/ucsf-publishes-anti-biotech-propaganda-refuses-answer-questions-13102>

[4] <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/SnapCrap-app-San-Francisco-poop-feces-dirty-street-13281837.php>

[5] <https://twitter.com/lachlan/status/1120425646549864448>

[6] <https://harmreductionjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12954-018-0237-7>

[7] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/12/28/stanton-glantz-says-vapers-should-smoke-cigarettes-instead-13690>

[8] <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/25/us/juul-ban.html>

[9] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/08/28/if-seattle-smokers-follow-king-countys-health-advice-they-will-die-11754>