

Gov. Nixon s e-cigarette veto: harming smokers, not protecting kids

By ACSH Staff — September 11, 2014

Dr. Gilbert Ross submission to MO newspapers re: SB841, September 8, 2014.

Gov. Nixon s e-cigarette veto: harming smokers, not protecting kids

Gilbert Ross, M.D

The American Council on Science and Health

September 8th, 2014

Acceding to the well-rehearsed indoctrination by several big public health lobbying groups, Gov. Jay Nixon misguidedly vetoed SB841 a bill passed overwhelmingly in both Chambers which would have protected Missouri s teens while encouraging addicted adult smokers to quit their deadly habit. The bill would have banned sales of electronic cigarettes and vapor products (e-cigs) to minors, but would not have regulated (and **taxed**) them as if they were tobacco cigarettes as they most certainly are not.

How could such a perverse action have been taken by a respected public official? Well, Gov. Nixon is not alone is being swept up in the anti-e-cigarette dogma spreading around our nation like an epidemic. And like an epidemic, the results of this baseless crusade of alarmism, self-interest and fear have the potential to sicken and kill millions: indeed, almost half a million Americans die each year from smoking.

No one has been killed, sickened or injured by vaping, the use of e-cigarettes. On the contrary, while the market for these devices, which produce nicotine-laced water vapor with a few other substances known to the FDA to be safe, has skyrocketed, sales of deadly combustible cigarettes have plummeted. This happy outcome has been most noticeable among our youth the very age group that those dogged opponents of e-cigarettes claim to be most concerned about. While they rant about a hypothetical attraction to e-cigarettes among youngsters, and then jump on to the gateway bandwagon, positing that vaping leads to cigarette smoking, when the opposite is actually coming to pass: teen smoking rates dropped dramatically, even as e-cigarettes become more and more common in our society.

So why, you ask, would well-known health nonprofits, led by the American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society, send their members trekking around the country lobbying politicians and regulators to ban this breakthrough technology? And while doing that, they don't seem to mind throwing the kids they allege to care about under the bus, urging legislators against passing laws preventing sales and marketing to minors. Why are they more devoted to regulating e-cigs as tobacco products than they are to keeping them out of the reach of minors?

I don't know for certain why they are acting in such a despicable, unethical manner, advocating unfettered access for kids and preventing smokers from easier access to a method that actually works to help them quit. But I have my suspicions.

Without attributing motivation, let me simply tell you that their actions are a perversion of sound public health policy: cigarette smoking is the most urgent yet preventable public health issue in our country. Their mantra is, Well, we just don't know how well they work to help smokers quit, and we just don't know what the possible health effects will be five, ten and twenty years down the road. To which I say, we surely know what the effects will be of continuing to smoke: fully one-half of smokers will die prematurely from smoking. Since smokers smoke for the nicotine but die from the smoke, doesn't it make sense to supply them with their nicotine, free of the thousands of toxic and carcinogenic chemicals in tobacco smoke?

Here's what I do know: millions of smokers have quit their toxic addiction to combustible cigarettes through vaping. Why in the world should electronic cigarettes be treated like deadly cigarettes: they have no tobacco and they emit no smoke. To regulate them as if they were cigarettes, including bans from all indoor locations (and some outdoor ones too), plus the attendant taxation levels, would discourage many poorer smokers from using them (or continuing to use them) to stay clean. Three quarters of the 42 million smokers in America want to quit, but less than ten percent succeed in a year because of a dirty little secret: the FDA-approved methods to help smokers quit rarely work, and some of those are actually toxic!

Academic centers have analyzed e-cig vapor, and found little-to-zero likelihood of harm, to the vaper as well as to bystanders. Studies have shown that e-cigs are superior to FDA-approved products patches, gum, and drugs in helping smokers quit. Studies have shown that young people who have used e-cigs have almost always been prior smokers, and are trying to quit, just like adults. It is a myth that flavored vaping products attract kids, but if repeated often enough many believe it (in fact, surveys have shown that it's adults who prefer kid-friendly flavors seventy percent of the time!). Those who want to ban or restrict e-cigs while awaiting outcomes (which will take years to assess) would condemn hundreds of thousands of Missouri smokers to lingering disease and premature death in the interim. Further, SB841 does nothing to impede FDA rule-making decisions (as the Governor and the anti-e-cig lobbyists implied) and it could take up to 5 years before those regulations are finalized; until then if SB841 stands vetoed, children will continue to be able to purchase and use nicotine vapor products.

Experts have predicted that electronic devices will outstrip deadly combustible cigarettes within a decade or so IF government tax collectors and nanny-state regulators will get out of the way. This technology should be a public health miracle. Devotees of public health should fervently hope that Missouri's lawmakers won't be influenced by agenda-driven advocacy groups beholden to Big

Pharma. Don't balance the budget on the backs of Missouri's smokers and ex-smokers: keep e-cigarettes readily available to those who so desperately need them. Gov. Nixon's unfortunate veto of SB 841 should be overridden.

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2014/09/11/gov-nixons-e-cigarette-veto-harming-smokers-protecting-kids>