



Media Release

Office of Supervisor Ken Yeager

For Immediate Release:
October 19, 2016

Contact:
Christine Stavem, Communications Director
(408) 299-5040 [w] / (415) 531-8124 [c]
christine.m.stavem@bos.sccgov.org

Santa Clara County Leads the Nation in Restricting Menthols and Other Flavored Tobacco Products

San Jose, CA- Santa Clara County today became the first jurisdiction in the nation to ban the sale of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, everywhere in the county's jurisdiction except at retailers that are only accessible to those 21 and over.

This action is the latest in a series of tobacco and nicotine-related restrictions that Supervisor Ken Yeager has initiated during the last decade. The county's comprehensive tobacco retail licensing program that he proposed and the Board approved in 2010 has become a national model for local jurisdictions in regulating the sale of tobacco products, including prohibiting the sale near schools.

"Flavorings, including menthol, mask the harsh taste of tobacco and make it easier for people, especially young people, to start using and eventually become addicted," said Supervisor Yeager.

Flavored electronic cigarettes are growing in popularity both locally and nationally in large part because of the false perception that they are not a health hazard the way tobacco products are. In fact, they can contain both high levels of nicotine as well as flavoring chemicals that cause irreversible lung damage and loss of pulmonary function.

Electronic cigarettes are being marketed directly at young people with brand names such as Cotton Candy, Hawaiian Punch, and Cap N' Crunch. As many as 85% of teens who vape reportedly use flavored e-cigs.

Menthol cigarettes account for approximately one-third of all cigarette sales in the U.S. and are especially popular in the African-American community.

"Today's action by our county limits the sale of menthol cigarettes to adult-only shops and protects kids and communities of color, who have been disproportionately harmed by these products. We hope to inspire other counties and cities to take similar action," said Dr. Sara Cody, Santa Clara County Health Officer and Public Health Director.

The health impacts of menthol cigarettes are significant. 45,000 African-Americans die each year in the U.S. from smoking-related illnesses. In Santa Clara County, 40 percent of African-Americans

suffer from high blood pressure, the highest rate among any of the county's ethnic groups. African-Americans also have the highest cancer mortality rate in the county.

“Restricting the sale of menthol tobacco is critically important to reduce tobacco use and help protect youth from a lifetime of addiction. Supervisor Ken Yeager and the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors are once again setting a national precedent,” said American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Government Relations Director Cassie Ray.

###