

Panel nixes bill to raise tobacco use age

An Idaho Senate panel has rejected a bill to raise the age to purchase and use tobacco products to 21-years-old.

The bill before the Senate State Affairs Committee, SB 1255, was the second attempt at raising the smoking age to 21 by Sen. Fred Martin, R-Boise. He proposed a similar bill last year; it also failed.

Idaho would have become the sixth state to raise the smoking age to 21. California, Hawaii, Maine, New Jersey and Oregon have made the age 21. Utah has made the age 19 and has tried several times to raise the age to 21.

Much of the opposition focused on not allowing 18-year-olds, who are adults under the law, to have full autonomy.

“Maybe we have the age of changing from being a minor being wrong. But, as long as we have it as this age, choices Legislature that we can make... at this age as well,” said Sen. Steve Vick, R-Dalton Gardens.

Supporters worried about older high schoolers buying tobacco for minors.

Committee Chairman Jeff Siddoway, R-Terreton, recalled a friend of his who recently died from complications of cancer. He said his friend began smoking at just 14-years-old. “If those seniors in that school wouldn’t have had the ability to just buy those cigarettes and give them to those young kids, I just have to think that he never would have gotten into that situation,” Siddoway said. Two high school students spoke at the committee about the rising prevalence of e-cigarettes by youth. According to a 2015 survey by the Idaho State Department of Education, e-cigarettes are the most popular tobacco product used by Idaho high school students. Nearly 25 percent of students reported using e-cigarettes in the past month, while just 18 percent reported using traditional tobacco products.

Margery Soni, associate director of the tobacco cessation program at St. Luke’s Clinic, spoke on the vulnerability that minors face to addiction.

“Adolescents who use nicotine containing products, in the form of tobacco or e-cigarettes, are highly likely to become lifelong tobacco users because of the effects of early exposure to nicotine on the developing brain,” she said.

In closing the debate, Martin said, “That’s why I proposed this bill. To remove that out of the schools. 16-17-year-olds have daily contact with an 18-year-old. They do not have daily contact with a 21-year-old.”

Only Sens. Cherie Buckner-Webb and Siddoway spoke in favor of the bill. Sen. Hagedorn moved to hold the bill in committee, which passed on a voice vote, with only three senators dissenting. Sen. Pattie Anne Lodge, R-Huston, was absent for the vote and discussion.

IMPpulse

Intermountain Media Pulse

A TRUETONE INCORPORATED COMPANY

**news
CLIP**

11623 Lake Shore
Nampa, ID 83686
(208) 880-9814

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Bonner County Daily Bee

Sandpoint, Idaho

Saturday, February 24, 2018

Kyle Pfaffenstiel

Page 2 of 2

Martin said in an interview afterwards that he is not discouraged by two years of bill failures.

“The committee gave me some good instructions as to possible flaws that they perceived in the bill, so I appreciate that.” he said. “I will continue to work on this issue, maybe not this session but in future sessions, yes.”

###

Copyright 2018 Bonner County Daily Bee