



**CALIFORNIA TOBACCO
ENDGAME CENTER FOR
ORGANIZING AND ENGAGEMENT**

A project of the American Heart Association®



Raising our Voices Against Tobacco for Our Rural Communities

California has come a long way in the fight against tobacco, yet the tobacco industry continues to thwart our efforts and to addict new users each and every day. Our most critical work lies ahead of us.

Rural smokers tend to smoke at higher rates than their urban counterparts, even in California where overall smoking rates are low, and are also twice as likely to use chewing tobacco.¹ It's time to eliminate the unfair health burden tobacco places on rural communities.

Tobacco impacts the health of our rural communities by specifically targeting them.

- Rural adults' use of any tobacco product is significantly higher (25.6%) than the California general population (14.6%).⁴
- Rural residents start smoking at an earlier age.³
- Images of cowboys, hunters, and race car drivers are used in tobacco marketing to appeal to young, rural individuals and get them hooked on deadly tobacco products.³
- Rural-county stores were more than twice as likely as other stores to sell roll-your-own tobacco and two times more likely to sell chewing tobacco than stores in nonrural counties.²
- In rural areas, there is greater density of tobacco stores with 93 stores selling tobacco per 100,000 residents in rural areas versus 79.6 stores for 100,000 residents across California.⁴
- Rural-county stores were found to be significantly more likely to advertise at least one discount for chewing tobacco and vaping products which appeals to price-sensitive consumers, including youth (20.9% prevalence of discounts in rural communities vs. 16.8% in nonrural communities).²

The California Tobacco Endgame Center for Organizing and Engagement
A Project of the American Heart Association
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OrganizingToEndTobacco.org

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Tobacco litter negatively impacts the environment of rural communities.

- Cigarette butts are the number one most littered item in the world.⁵
- Cigarette butts leach toxic chemicals into the environment including lead, arsenic and nicotine – the same toxic chemicals found in secondhand smoke.⁵

COVID-19 and tobacco are a deadly combination.

- Research shows that smoking is most likely associated with people getting sicker from COVID-19.^{7,10}
- Smoking weakens your immune system and your body's ability to fight infections such as COVID-19.⁸
- COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted African American, Latino/Hispanic, Tribal Communities, LGBTQ, Rural and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders - some of the same communities hardest hit by tobacco industry targeting and the disease and death caused by tobacco.
- People who smoke or vape and get COVID-19 virus are at increased risk of developing more severe symptoms.^{8,10}
- Smoking, vaping or using a hookah can spread COVID-19 as users are repeatedly putting their hands to their mouths and faces, often in a social setting.⁹

While we're fighting a deadly pandemic, there is a teen vaping epidemic in this state.

- Governor Gavin Newsom signed an executive order to confront the growing youth epidemic and health risks linked to vaping.
- Vaping devices are the most commonly used tobacco product in California.
- More than 80 percent of high-school students who use tobacco use a vaping device.³
- Of the California teens who use tobacco products, including vape products, 86.4% report using a flavored tobacco product.³
- The tobacco and vaping industry use flavors to attract teens to vaping.
- The tobacco industry knows that it's easier to get youth in rural areas hooked because they're less likely to be exposed to tobacco-free messaging.³

Smart tobacco policies can save lives and improve rural communities.

- In a survey of rural and small-town Californians, over 85% felt that secondhand smoke was harmful and 70% were in favor of policies prohibiting smoking at outdoor events such as rodeos and fairs. Local smoke free outdoor air laws can protect rural Californians from the secondhand smoke they want to avoid.⁶
- Securing tobacco control funds may help increase cessation service access and strengthen health infrastructure in rural areas.⁶
- Smart tobacco policy can help create an environment where community leaders and leaders and families feel empowered to reject the culture of tobacco use and choose healthier, tobacco-free futures.

How smart tobacco policies can save lives and improve rural communities.

- Stronger regulations on tobacco sampling and coupons can prevent the tobacco industry from having a presence at family- friendly events such as rodeos and fairs. Currently, tobacco promotions are much more common at events in rural communities compared with events in urban communities.



- Local retail licensing policies can reduce youth access to tobacco and help rural communities enforce minimum age purchase laws.
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SOURCES

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Social Media



Rural youth are 3x more likely to smoke than other youth. Raise your voice to support rural communities and families in the fight against Big Tobacco.

Join us: organizingtoendtobacco.org/virtualdayofaction2020/

#VoicesAgainstTobacco



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