

NYC Council Approves Ban On Indoor E-Cigarette Use

Bloomberg Expected To Sign Legislation

December 19, 2013 9:25 PM

NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) – The New York City Council approved legislation Thursday to ban the use of electronic cigarettes from indoor public spaces where smoking is already prohibited. E-cigarettes have been endorsed by celebrities, marketed in multiple flavors and are soaring in popularity.

Battery operated, the device heats up liquid nicotine and delivers a chemical-infused vapor. E-cigarettes are billed by many manufacturers as the cigarettes you can smoke anywhere, but that would no longer be true in New York City if Mayor Michael Bloomberg signs the bill, which he is expected to do.

Under the bill, e-cigarettes would be prohibited in the same places as traditional cigarettes and other tobacco products throughout the city. The ban would go into effect in four months, CBS 2's Sonia Rincon reported. Businesses and restaurants would have another six months to put up signs indicating there is no smoking or "vaping" allowed.

City Council Speaker Christine Quinn said the ban would make it easier to enforce the city's Smoke-Free Air Act, which banned smoking in bars, restaurants and other indoor public spaces. "Because many of the e-cigarettes are designed to look like cigarettes and be used just like them, they can lead to confusion or confrontation," Quinn said.

The speaker added that the ban will end what she called the re-normalization of smoking in public places, 1010 WINS' Al Jones reported.

"It's not the norm anymore. Very few people feel uncomfortable now saying you can't smoke in public. We don't want to step backwards in that," Quinn said.

The World Health Organization says the risks from e-cigarettes are

undetermined. Since the products do not contain tobacco, opponents fear they create addictions among adolescents.

But the American Association of Public Health Physicians recommends them to addicts as a way to wean off traditional cigarettes.

E-cigarette users said they're disappointed by the ban.

"I think that it's unfortunate that now people who are in transition or successful in quitting smoking using this product are forced to go outside and forced to be with the smokers," Ilona Orshansky told Rincon.

"They're much less harmful to your bystanders," one woman told WCBS 880's Jim Smith said. "They don't have to deal with the smoke."

Some opponents of the ban said they are considering a lawsuit against the city on the grounds that the law is overreaching, Rincon reported.

In October, the City Council voted to raise the minimum legal age to buy cigarettes in New York City to 21, the first of its kind in the nation. If sellers violate the law by selling to people under 21, they could be fined up to \$1,000 for each violation found in a single day and up to \$2,000 for a second violation. Retailers could also lose their license to sell tobacco products.

The measure applies to cigarettes, cigars and cigarillos and e-cigarettes. It also prohibits the sale of small cigars in packages of less than 20.

The bill cited a report by the Centers for Disease Control that shows the number of high school students who have tried e-cigarettes has jumped 6 percent in the last year.

Earlier this year, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority added e-cigarettes to its smoking ban on Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North trains.

Statewide restrictions on e-cigarettes are already in place. Last year, Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed a ban on the sale of the devices to anyone under 18 and made it illegal to smoke them within 100 feet of entrances to public or private schools.

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2013/12/19/city-council-to-vote-on-indoor-e-cigarettes-ban/>