

Chicago Tribune

Chicago bans indoor electronic cigarette smoking

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E-cigarettes will join regular smokes and other tobacco products as forbidden in most indoor public places in Chicago after aldermen today passed a measure backed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel to restrict where electronic cigarettes can be used and how they can be sold.

The ordinance, which passed 45-4 after opponents took one last chance to voice their displeasure, will prohibit people from using e-cigarettes in restaurants, bars and most other indoor public places in the city. The measure also will require retailers to sell e-cigarettes from behind the counter so it's harder for minors to get their hands on them.

Emanuel has made tobacco regulations a recent focus, working to frame the discussion over cigarette sales as a question of how willing elected officials are to protect children from getting lured into addiction at a young age.

At the last City Council meeting, aldermen voted to restrict sales of menthol cigarettes near Chicago schools. Emanuel delivered a short speech from the dais positioning himself as a bulwark against the evils of Big Tobacco. Emanuel also increased the city's cigarette tax as part of his 2014 budget.

On Wednesday, the mayor used the passage of the e-cigarette regulations as a chance to again lay out his anti-tobacco bona fides, saying Chicago can't wait for the Food and Drug Administration to take a position on the safety of the products.

"Having worked with the FDA, having encouraged them to take steps to protect individuals and children, they are usually an

agency that leads from behind,” Emanuel said. “And when it comes to the city of Chicago, when it comes to the people of the city of Chicago, when it comes to the children of the city of Chicago, I do not believe we should wait.”

But Ald. Brendan Reilly, 42nd, a smoker, continued to oppose the indoor ban on e-cigarettes. Reilly, who said he’s using e-cigarettes to help himself quit, likened e-cigarettes to needle exchanges for heroin addicts and said they help reduce the harm smokers suffer by offering a product safer than conventional smokes. “We’re talking about treating two different products like they’re one, like they’re combustible cigarettes,” Reilly said.

And Ald. Rey Colon, 35th, said he resents how people who oppose greater restrictions on e-smoking have been accused of not having children’s best interests at heart. “I hate to keep using, I keep thinking of that movie ‘My Cousin Vinnie’ – ‘the youths, the youths.’ We keep using the children as an excuse to pass any ordinance we want to pass, because who can deny the children?” Colon said.

In other action: Aldermen approved \$13.8 million in lawsuit settlements. Nanny Jennifer Anton was pushing a stroller carrying a 20-month-old girl and shoved the child out of harm's way before drunken city worker Dwight Washington crashed his city pickup truck into a crowd on a Gold Coast sidewalk. Anton will receive \$7.4 million for severe injuries she suffered in the May 2011 incident. Separately, Larry Gillard will get nearly \$6.4 million for a wrongful conviction in a 1981 rape case.

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