

NYDailyNews.com

DAILY NEWS

New York City to ban flavored cigars, says they tempt kids to start puffin'

BY [Frank Lombardi](#)

DAILY NEWS CITY HALL BUREAU

Monday, October 19th 2009, 4:00 AM

The city that led the country in banning smoking in bars, restaurants and most public spaces is about to ban the sale of flavored tobacco products.

A long-debated bill authorizing the flavored-tobacco ban was finally approved by the City Council last Wednesday, by a 46-to-1 vote. [Mayor Bloomberg](#) - who instigated the city's smoking crackdown in 2002 - said he will sign the bill into law soon.

The ban will likely kick in around February, and cost the city up to \$2 million a year in lost sales tax revenues.

Advocates argued that although cigarette smoking continues to decrease, the sales of cigars and cigarillos have been rising, including those with candy-like flavors. The flavored smokes can lure teens into becoming addicted, [Council Speaker Christine Quinn](#) (D-Manhattan) said during the vote, and the ban is needed "to protect the children of [New York City](#)."

[Michele Bonan](#), regional director of advocacy for the [American Cancer Society](#), one of the groups pushing the ban, said flavored tobacco is "Big Tobacco's version of training wheels" to attract young smokers.

Tobacco-industry officials have opposed the bill, saying such regulations should occur only at the federal level.

The city's ban will be stiffer than one announced last month by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#), which only covers cigarettes. The city's ban will apply to all flavored tobacco products, with the exception of products flavored with "menthol, mint or clove tastes or aromas."

The flavored-tobacco ban will be the first of its kind in the country, according to advocates and Council sponsors of the bill, led by [Joel Rivera](#) (D-Bronx), chairman of the [Council's Health Committee](#).

The banned flavors include any fruit, chocolate, vanilla, honey, candy, cocoa, alcoholic beverage, herb or spice. They've been marketed with such exotic labels as "Warm Mocha Mint," "Twista Lime," and "Midnight Berry."

Once the ban kicks in, violations for sales, even to adults, will carry fines starting at \$500 and jumping to \$2,000 for repeat offenders with suspension of licenses to sell tobacco for up to one year.

[Brooklyn Councilman Lewis Fidler](#), who cast the sole "No" vote, said he occasionally smokes grape-flavored cigars and argued that the sale of such products to minors is already illegal. He said the ban won't work and suggested a better alternative would have been to tax them high enough to "to make an economic disincentive for them to be used."

flombardi@nydailynews.com

RECENT COMMENTS FROM DAILY NEWS READERS