

Newsday

Ban on E-Liquids for E-Cigarettes Proposed in State Senate

Delthia Ricks, April 5, 2014

A Long Island state senator has introduced legislation that would ban for sale in New York all so-called e-liquids, the fluids popularly used in e-cigarettes.

State Sen. Kemp Hannon (R-Garden City) said he is well aware that his bill, which was introduced late last week, is bound to engender the ire of e-cigarette users, a majority of whom attest to the safety of the devices -- and the fluids -- and want them free of restrictions.

There is no companion bill in the Assembly for Hannon's newly introduced Senate bill.

E-liquids are generally sold in vials, which are used to refill electronic cigarettes, battery-powered devices that contain propylene glycol and a slurry of other chemicals and dyes. E-cigarettes are noteworthy for the clouds of vapor users produce.

"I know this bill will make some people angry," Hannon said, "and I'll tell you how mad they are: The year we approved legislation saying e-cigarettes could be sold only to people who were 18 or older, I had a bill to ban e-cigarettes totally. "Even my colleagues did not agree with me on that."

Hannon wrote the new measure because his research has shown "nicotine in liquid form can be absorbed more quickly, even when diluted."

"Forms of liquid nicotine need to be reviewed and scrutinized," Hannon said. E-cigarettes can be nicotine-free but most are notable for their copious amounts of the compound, which can differ from one manufacturer to another. There are no guidelines or rules on the chemical composition of e-liquids, some of which come from unregulated sources abroad.

A single e-liquid can contain the nicotine amount found in 20 conventional cigarettes, some studies have shown. E-liquids also come in fanciful flavors, which add to their allure.

Hannon underscored that e-liquids, like electronic cigarettes, are not regulated by the federal government. "Between 2012 and 2013, calls to poison control centers involving e-liquids have increased by 300 percent," he said, "and many of these have been calls involving children under 6 years old."

Dr. Shahriyour Andaz, director of thoracic oncology at South Nassau Communities Hospital in Oceanside, said nicotine is not benign. It is not only highly addictive, the public has not been effectively educated on how easily liquefied nicotine can be absorbed through the skin.

Andaz said nicotine is a notable poison.

"Nicotine has been used as an insecticide," he said, emphasizing that he is aware of the compound's other property -- addictiveness -- based on his work with lung cancer patients who had long-standing conventional smoking habits.

Manufacturers promote e-cigarettes as smoking cessation devices.

Yet, many health officials note that people who switch from conventional cigarettes to electronic ones exchange one source of nicotine for another without the tapering-down process associated with other forms of smoking cessation.

Hannon's concern about e-liquids, meanwhile, is shared by experts at the North Shore-LIJ Center for Tobacco Control in Great Neck. Team members at the center worry about added chemicals in some e-cigarettes, such as solvents and carcinogens.

The North Shore center does not use e-cigarettes in its smoking cessation programs because the products are unregulated and the chemical contents are often a mystery.

An analysis of e-cigarette chemicals by a team of U.S. Food and Drug Administration scientists, for instance, revealed a surprising number of ingredients.

Taken from the cartridges of leading brands, investigators found e-liquids contained diethylene glycol, a chemical used in antifreeze that is toxic to humans. In several other samples, carcinogens, including nitrosamines, were found.

"The potential for misuse of e-liquids is real," Hannon said. "This is another problem that's out there in the market. It didn't even exist as a commercial product initially."

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