



Increasing smoking age will reap long-term benefits: Editorial

16484129-mmmain.jpg

California is looking into increasing the age for purchasing cigarettes to 21. (AP File)

The Republican Editorials By **The Republican Editorials**

on June 10, 2015 at 9:30 AM

Most smokers started young. Find an adult who is puffing away on cigarettes – despite all the evidence of the harm that each smoke does to one's health – and the chances are better than 90 percent that he or she picked up the habit as a kid.

Viewed in another light, the best way to see that there are fewer smokers is to work to see that fewer kids have their first cigarette.

This is why states across the land would do well to **keep an eye on California**, which is looking into increasing the age for purchasing cigarettes to 21. The move was recently passed by the state Senate and is now before the state Assembly. If the measure becomes law, and if, over time, the move is seen to significantly decrease the rate of teen smoking, watch for other states to consider following suit. What happens in California seldom stays in California. The Golden State was out in front on healthy eating, on capping property taxes, on auto emissions – to name but a few. All quickly made their way east. If the smoking restrictions take effect and are successful, the same thing could happen.

Hopefully.

In Massachusetts, the statewide age for purchasing cigarettes and other tobacco products is 18, but individual cities and towns can opt for a higher age. So far, more than 50 communities have done just that, with Greenfield recently joining the growing list. Still, while the trend is clearly a positive one, a town-by-town approach makes so much less sense than does a statewide limit.

Because 15- and 16-year-olds would be more likely to know and associate with 18-year-olds than with those who are 21 – the former groups, after all, are in high school together – boosting the purchase age to 21 would clearly make it more difficult for younger teens to get their hands on cigarettes. And with fewer teens in the smoking pipeline, there'll be fewer adult smokers down the road. California may soon be embarking on an experiment that will almost certainly end up saving lives. Other states across the land would do well to pay attention.

© 2015 masslive.com. All rights reserved.