

Guam raises smoking age from 18 to 21

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HAGATNA, Guam (AP) - Guam has raised its smoking age from 18 to 21.

Starting Monday, it is illegal for individuals under 21 to smoke cigarettes or vape or access tobacco products, the Pacific Daily News reported.

The new rule was unanimously passed by the Legislature and became law without the governor's signature.

Those who are caught smoking illegally will be required to go through a mandatory education program that includes smoking cessation, according to the law.

Smoking rates in the island have declined in the past few years but remain higher than the national average, according to the American Cancer Society.

Health care professionals who supported the law cited a report by the Institute of Medicine which predicts tobacco use in the country would drop by 12 percent if the legal smoking age was raised to 21.

The law also had the support of young adults who signed petitions and spoke in favor of it, said Speaker Benjamin Cruz.

"This bill became law because of young people, not in spite of them," he said.

Johnny Lujan, 17, believes the law will lead to more people smoking illegally.

If he can be charged for a crime as an adult when he turns 18, he doesn't see why he should not be allowed to smoke.

"It just seems really dumb," Lujan said.

Cristopher Naputi, 20, who has been smoking since he was 18, agrees.

"I don't like it," he said. "Everyone has an opinion about it, but (smoking's) not hurting anybody."

Naputi does not plan to smoke illegally. Instead, he said he will use the months leading to his 21st birthday to decide whether he wants to continue smoking or quit.