

Calif. Senate votes to raise smoking age to 21

By Patrick McGreevy and Phil Wilson, Los Angeles Times

The state Senate on Tuesday approved a bill that would raise the minimum legal age for buying cigarettes and other tobacco products from 18 to 21 as part of an effort to reduce smoking by young people.

Sen. Ed Hernandez, D-West Covina, said he introduced the bill, SB151, out of concern that an estimated 90% of tobacco users start before age 21. Raising the minimum age will mean that fewer teenagers pick up the habit, said Hernandez, an optometrist.

He cited a study done by the Institute of Medicine for the federal Food and Drug Administration that concluded that raising the smoking age to 21 would cut smoking by 12 percent more than existing control policies.

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