

**Thank you for being a youth advocate for tobacco prevention!**

**Feel free to use the following information when reaching out to lawmakers and being an advocate for tobacco prevention!**

* Tobacco use is still the most preventable cause of death and disease in Vermont.
* Cigarette sales have increased for the 1st time in 20 years and VT’s adult smoking rate of 16% is now higher than the national average of 14%.
* With the impact of the e-cigarette crisis, 28% of Vermont high school students now use tobacco products.

**The toll of tobacco in Vermont is great!**

* Vermont spends $348 million each year treating tobacco-caused illnesses.
* 1000 Vermonters adults will die this year due to tobacco use.
* 10,000 kids alive today will die prematurely from smoking.
* There is also the immediate impact of nicotine on youths’ developing brains.

**Even more important to lawmakers than statistics like these are stories from Vermonters who are impacted and that means Vermont youth! We hope you will share you story with Vermont lawmakers, whatever it is:**

* Tell them how your school has been impacted by vaping.
* Tell them how a family member of yours has been impacted by tobacco and may be suffering from a chronic disease.
* Let them know if you tried a vaping product but got hooked and never thought you’d become addicted.
* Let them know you want them to make youth tobacco use a priority because kids are more important than tobacco industry profits.
* Ask them to come to your school or an advocacy event.

**There are 30 Senators and 150 House members in the Vermont Legislature and they are easy to talk to.**

* They meet January through May each year at the Statehouse in Montpelier. But you can contact them anytime by phone or email, a letter to the editor, or even testifying during the legislative session. Their contact info is on the legislative website below.
* Committees now stream their meetings so you can watch via Youtube and you can testify virtually by Zoom or phone.

**You can find the legislators that serve you by going to:**

* <https://legislature.vermont.gov> and typing in your town.
* You can also send messages to them directly by signing up as a youth advocate on our advocacy pages:
[www.yourethecure.org](http://www.yourethecure.org) or [www.tobaccoendgame.org](http://www.tobaccoendgame.org)

**Its so important that lawmakers hear your voices.**

* 86% of Vermont youth and young adults who ever used an e-cigarette said their first use was a flavored e-cigarette.
* Youth aged 12-17 make up the biggest users of menthol tobacco. Menthol is attractive to youth because of its cooling effect, and gets kids hooked.
* Menthol has been aggressively marketed to people of color and has resulted in 85% of black smokers and 7 out of 10 black youth who smoke using menthol.

 **But the legislature has not acted to eliminate the sale of menthol and flavored tobacco. And, despite increasing smoking rates by adults and the alarming youth vaping rate, Vermont’s tobacco control program is underfunded. Lawmakers need to hear from youth!**

Vermont receives nearly 100 million in revenue from tobacco each year (through tobacco taxes and funds it receives from the settlement with the tobacco industry known as the MSA) and spends only $3.8 million on tobacco prevention. This is $2.3 million short of what the CDC recommends.

Vermont needs to do more when the tobacco industry spends $14.1 million annually marketing its products in Vermont to get hooked, long-term customers.

**You can use your voice and let lawmakers know you are concerned about tobacco’s impact in Vermont.

Call or email American Heart Association Vermont Government Relations Director Tina Zuk anytime for questions or help:** **Tina.zuk@heart.org****, 802-578-3466**

**Sources:**

[**2019 BRFSS Tobacco Data Brief**](https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HS_Tobacco_BRFSS_Brief_2019_2021_11.pdf)[**Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey**](https://www.healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/population-health-surveys-data/youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs)[**Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids – Toll of Tobacco in Vermont**](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/vermont)