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Once a Supporter of Vaping Ban, Trump Eases Stance: 'If You Don't Give it to Them, it is Going to Come Here Illegally'

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President Donald Trump is softening his stance on banning vaping, stating during a meeting at the White House on Friday that the move would potentially do more harm than good, with those wanting to the drug turning to illegal means since it wouldn't be available legally.

“If you don’t give it to them, it is going to come here illegally,” Mr. Trump said during the meeting with vaping industry leaders, public-health advocates and others on policies to address a surge in underage vaping, [according to the Wall Street Journal](#). The president said that instead of legitimate companies “making something that’s safe, they are going to be selling stuff on a street corner that could be horrible. That’s the one problem I can’t seem to forget.”

“Now instead of having a flavor that’s at least safe, they are going to be having a flavor that’s poison,” he said.

The talk of a ban on vaping came to the fore after a mysterious lung disease caused by vaping led to multiple deaths across the United States and its territories, including the U.S. Virgin Islands. “There is also a growing number of cases in the Virgin Islands that are being investigated,” Dr. Esther Ellis, epidemiologist for Virgin Islands Department of Health, [said in September](#).

In September, the president announced his administration's move to bar all e-cigarettes except those that taste like tobacco. But before Mr. Trump could announce details of the ban, he received pushback from special interest groups, e-cigarette users and vaping advocates, according to WSJ.

The president did reiterate his support for pushing the minimum age for e-cigarettes and other tobacco products from 18 to 21, a move that e-cigarette maker Juul Labs Inc. — which represents 64 percent of the market and has been blamed for the rise in teen vaping — supports.

According to WSJ, Juul Chief Executive K.C. Crosthwaite said flavors can help adult cigarette smokers switch to a less harmful alternative for their nicotine fix. He added that the company would defer to the science-based approach of the Food and Drug Administration to determine which products ultimately should remain on the market. Mr. Crosthwaite was responding to a question from the president on whether Juuls would consider a voluntary sales restriction.

According to WSJ, Juul and other e-cigarette manufacturers face a May deadline to submit for FDA review any products they want to sell in the U.S. after that point.

“Preserving an option for adult smokers who can’t quit is really important work. That’s the mission of our company,” Mr. Crosthwaite said. “This youth issue, we felt, and we were a part of it, we had to address it as the leader. We took the tough steps to change our portfolio.”

Earlier this month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said samples of lung fluid from 29 lung injury patients in 10 states all contained the same chemical. The CDC’s discovery is a major step forward in the battle to identify the cause of a mysterious lung illness caused by vaping.

By November 5, 39 people had died of the injury, and 2,051 cases were being investigated. As of November 22, vaping-linked deaths climbed to 47, along with 2,290 cases.

The chemical, called vitamin E acetate is now considered a “chemical of concern” by the CDC. The federal agency said that vitamin E acetate is an oily substance found in many household items, including foods, supplements, and even skin creams.

“Vitamin E acetate usually does not cause harm when ingested as a vitamin supplement or applied to the skin. However, previous research suggests when vitamin E acetate is inhaled, it may interfere with normal lung functioning,” the CDC explained on its website.

Chemistry professor Michelle Franci told The Washington Post in September that while the oil might be good for skincare, when heated up, it can act almost like a grease. Therefore, breathing vaporized grease could badly damage the lungs, though researchers are still trying to figure out the exact mechanism that’s causing the lung damage.

Investigators believe that the substance has been added to e-cigarette products as a thickener. This, investigators believe, has been particularly attractive to people manufacturing illicit products

because it resembles tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) oil. THC is the substance in marijuana that provides a high.

Vitamin E acetate was previously linked to the injuries in early September, when some state agencies identified the substance in samples of vaping products that had been used by people who later came down with the disease. But finding it in products wasn't the same as finding it in the patients themselves.

[In this case](#), researchers looked at fluid taken from the lungs of patients suffering from the injury, and found vitamin E acetate in every sample. THC was found in 82 percent of the lung fluid samples, and nicotine was found in 62 percent of the samples, suggesting that the vast majority of patients were vaping THC products, and that many were using both nicotine and THC products.

The CDC looked for other additives in the samples, including mineral oils and plant oils, but didn't find anything to cause concern.