



Survey of California Voters

About Ordinances that Restrict Tobacco Retailer Near Schools and Local Tobacco Retailer Licensing Ordinances

Public Opinion Research Survey: April 2011

Background

The sale of tobacco products to minors is a problem in most cities and counties in California. Illegal sales by retailers contribute to the start of a lifelong addiction of many youth to tobacco. To combat this problem, many communities have passed a law that requires retailers to obtain a license to sell tobacco products. In addition, some communities have also passed a law that restricts the location of tobacco retailers within a certain distance of schools. A restriction on the location of tobacco retailers can be “plugged-in” to the basic licensing ordinance, which also includes an annual fee to fund an enforcement program and provisions for suspending or revoking the license for violations.

In April 2011, the Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing commissioned a survey of 600 California voters to gauge the level of support for licensing ordinances and other policies in the tobacco retail environment. The survey was conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research. This fact sheet summarizes the results of questions on two specific policies: (1) ordinances that restrict tobacco retailers near schools and (2) tobacco retailer licensing ordinances. For a fact sheet that summarizes the results for all the policies in the tobacco retail environment and other survey documents, visit www.Center4TobaccoPolicy.org/polling-retailer-policies.

Summary of Key Findings

Restricting Tobacco Retailers Near Schools

California voters support a law that restricts the location of tobacco retailers in areas around schools:

- 73% support a law prohibiting any business located within 1,000 feet of a school from selling tobacco products
- 57% feel that stores that are currently located within 1,000 feet of a school should not be allowed to continue to sell tobacco products if such a law was adopted

California voters are receptive to arguments in favor of prohibiting tobacco retailers within 1,000 feet of schools:

- 79% think a good reason to restrict tobacco retailers near schools is that this law will reduce illegal sales to minors
- 79% think a good reason to restrict tobacco retailers near schools is that this law can reduce youth smoking



Arguments opposing the law to restrict tobacco retailers within 1,000 feet of schools are less effective. In fact, California voters are more likely to think that the opposition statements are not a good reason to allow tobacco retailer near schools:

- 48% think a good reason to continue to allow tobacco retailers near schools is that it's wrong for the government to tell stores where they can and cannot do business, while 50% said that was not a good reason
- 35% think a good reason to continue to allow tobacco retailers near schools is that a law like this could hurt the economy and jobs during this recession, while 60% said that was not a good reason

Provisions of a Tobacco Retailer Licensing Ordinance

A policy restricting the location of tobacco retailers within a certain distance of schools can be “plugged-in” to a tobacco retailer licensing ordinance. A licensing ordinance allows for greater enforcement of laws against selling tobacco products to minors. California voters support a licensing ordinance and the different provisions of such a law:

- 45% feel that it is easy for minors to buy cigarettes at local retail stores
- 83% support requiring store owners to get a license to sell cigarettes and other tobacco products
- 80% favor a fee of a few hundred dollars a year that would be used to enforce the law against selling cigarettes to minors
- 88% agree that a store owner who repeatedly sells cigarettes to minors should have their license to sell tobacco products suspended

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research. This survey data represents information acquired from 600 voters by telephone interview, including both land lines and wireless numbers. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, with about 8% of the interviews conducted in Spanish. The margin of error for the survey results is plus or minus 4% at a 95% confidence level.

Resources

The Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing has many resources available on tobacco retailer licensing ordinances and other policies in the tobacco retail environment available at www.center4tobaccopolicy.org/localpolicies-licensing. These include documents that track ordinances in the tobacco retail environment, a fact sheet on drug paraphernalia in tobacco retailers and a document showing the effectiveness of tobacco retailer licensing ordinances in reducing sales to minors. For model ordinance language for many of the policies in the survey, visit the website of the Technical Assistance Legal Center at www.phlpnet.org/tobacco-control.