



SF Parents Rally to Declare, “Health is a Civil Right”

Tobacco companies fighting to overturn City’s ban on candy-flavored tobacco products and menthol cigarettes.

San Francisco, CA – Flanked by children and public health leaders, a group of San Francisco parents took to the steps of City Hall today to call on all elected officials, candidates, and political clubs in the city to make a public pledge to refuse to take money from tobacco companies.

The effort comes as tobacco companies prepare to wage a massive campaign to overturn the San Francisco Board of Supervisors’ unanimous decision to prohibit the sale of candy and menthol flavored tobacco products.

Carol McGruder: “**MLK is a day of service.** Today we honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who marched and died for the cause of freedom, equality, and civil rights. Dr. King taught us, progress is not made without struggle and sacrifice. Today we are here, calling out the Tobacco Industry for targeting communities of color and young people in an effort to “hook” a new generation of smokers. If you call yourself a Democrat or a San Franciscan, it’s time to stop the influence of the Tobacco industry in San Francisco. We call on all candidates to reject tobacco money. We call on all political clubs and organizations to reject tobacco money. We call on tobacco companies to Stop marketing candy flavored tobacco to children.”

Monica Chinchilla: “Our elected Board of Supervisors listened to parents and health leaders when they banned the sale of candy-flavored tobacco in SF, but Tobacco Companies, with their millions, are trying to bypass our elected leaders in their desire to push artificially sweet/candy flavored tobacco our kids. Make no mistake, candy flavored tobacco has but one purpose: hooking a new generation of smokers. For our health, freedom, democracy, and our children, we must stand up to Big Tobacco in 2018. We can’t let Big Tobacco bully our city, overthrow our laws, or poison our children.”

The parents group decided to call for a ban on tobacco money after witnessing what took place during the 2016 campaign to raise taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages. The Big Soda companies donated money to San Francisco Democratic political clubs, and that money was then used to support specific candidates.

Michelle Parker: “Today, We call on every elected official, candidate, and political club in San Francisco to reject ALL money from Tobacco companies. So this is a simple choice: You stand with our community or you stand with Big Tobacco. *Dr. King Said: “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”* And it’s time to walk the walk by getting Big Tobacco money out of San Francisco politics.”

Kent Woo: “Two years ago the beverage industry spent over \$30 million unsuccessfully trying to defeat a tax on the distribution of sugary beverages. Today the Tobacco industry is prepared to spend that and more. We call upon all our friends and allies in SF to reject Tobacco money. Don’t allow them to launder their money to SF political clubs.”

Public Health Org quotes:

“Youth who begin using menthol cigarettes or e-cigarettes are much more likely to become regular, addicted smokers,” said American Cancer Society Cancer Network California Managing Director Jim Knox. “Menthol smokers have a higher level of nicotine dependence, making cigarettes even more dangerous and difficult to quit. It’s outrageous that Big Tobacco’s marketing of menthols and other flavored tobacco products targets communities of color already suffering from high cancer rates and the costly impacts of tobacco-related diseases.”

San Francisco’s restriction on candy-flavored tobacco was the last public health law signed and supported by the late Mayor Ed Lee. The unanimous passage of the law by San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors sparked a backlash from the tobacco industry, which is trying to overturn the law with a June ballot measure.

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company is the sole funder of a referendum campaign. Flavored tobacco and menthol cigarettes are disproportionately marketed to African American, Asian American, Latino, LGBTQ and low-income communities already significantly impacted by tobacco-related disease. African Americans smoke menthol cigarettes at very high rates and quit smoking at lower rates, which is why communities of color have notably high death rates from lung cancer.

San Francisco Kids vs. Big Tobacco is a coalition of parents, doctors, health organizations and community groups working to protect our children and youth from the addictions of candy flavored tobacco products. Last June, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors made a trailblazing, unanimous, decision to prohibit the sale of candy-flavored tobacco products in the city. Many local, statewide and national organizations supported this legislation, but the tobacco industry, fearing a loss of economic profit is trying to overthrow our power to decide what's right for our community. On the upcoming June 2018 ballot, the residents of San Francisco will vote to uphold the prohibition set by the Board of Supervisors. For more information or to become involved with our effort, visit: www.sfkidsvsbigtobacco.com