

The Case for a Cigarette Ban in the USA

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Cigarette smoking is a global health crisis that claims millions of lives each year. New Zealand's recent ban on cigarette sales to individuals born after 2008 and the United Kingdom's proposal to enact a similar law have sparked discussions about whether the United States should follow suit. This essay explores the compelling reasons for the United States to consider implementing a similar ban, focusing on the staggering number of tobacco-related deaths and the measures already taken to restrict cigarette advertising.

Tobacco use takes a grim toll in the USA. It remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 480,000 Americans die each year due to tobacco-related illnesses. This startling statistic highlights the urgency of addressing the tobacco epidemic in our country. Moreover, the economic costs associated with smoking are substantial, with the CDC estimating over \$300 billion annually in direct medical costs and lost productivity.

New Zealand's approach can be a lesson for the USA. NZ's bold move to prohibit the sale of cigarettes to those born after 2008 demonstrates a commitment to reducing the harm caused by tobacco. By adopting a forward-thinking approach, they aim to create an entire smoke-free generation; thus sparing future generations from the burden of nicotine addiction. The USA can draw inspiration from this approach, recognizing that early intervention is key to curbing tobacco-related harm.

This month's proposal by the UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, signifies a growing global awareness of the need to more aggressively combat tobacco use. His proposal, if enacted, would focus on restricting access to cigarettes for young people, a critical first step in the fight against smoking-related illnesses. The USA should use this international momentum toward stricter tobacco control and take similar action. The USA needs to be a leader in this global effort.

The United States has already taken significant steps by restricting cigarette advertising. The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 granted the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority to regulate the marketing and promotion of tobacco products. This legislation led to powerful warning labels on cigarette packaging and limitations on advertising in various media. While these measures have made a positive impact, a complete ban on cigarette sales to individuals born after 2008 would be a more potent approach to reducing, and eventually eliminating, tobacco use amongst America's youth.

Enacting such a ban on cigarette sales does pose challenges and some important considerations, such as the potential for a black market and the impact on adults who smoke. At the same time, it does not address the risks posed by vaping/e-cigarettes - but it is an important first step. To address these concerns, the government should implement comprehensive smoking and vaping cessation programs and invest in addiction treatment resources.

The high number of deaths caused by tobacco use in the United States, along with the recent actions of New Zealand and the United Kingdom, underscores the urgency of enacting a similar ban in the USA on cigarette sales to individuals born after 2008. While restrictions on cigarette advertising have made progress, a more proactive approach is needed to protect future generations from the deadly

consequences of smoking. Implementing such a ban would signal a commitment to public health, reduce the financial burden on the healthcare system and ultimately save countless lives.

The United States stands at a historic crossroads, in a position to immediately shape the global movement against tobacco. This challenge demands visionary and resolute politicians to lead our country into a smoke-free future.