

# Senate leader calls for raising minimum age to buy tobacco products to 21

(Reuters) - U.S. Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell said on Thursday he plans to introduce legislation to raise the minimum age for buying tobacco products, including vaping devices, to 21 from 18 to curb their “epidemic” use among teens.

McConnell said here the bill would be introduced in May. Shares of Marlboro maker Altria Group Inc, which owns a 35 percent stake in e-cigarette maker Juul, fell 3 percent on the news. Philip Morris International and U.S-listed shares of British American Tobacco were also trading lower.

“For some time, I’ve been hearing from the parents who are seeing an unprecedented spike in vaping among their teenage children. ... Unfortunately, it’s reaching epidemic levels around the country,” the Republican senator from Kentucky said in a statement.

McConnell’s proposal comes as states and cities across the United States have moved to raise the legal age for purchasing tobacco in an effort to prevent addiction at young ages. A 2015 study from the National Academy of Medicine found that among adults who became daily smokers, about 90 percent started using cigarettes before they were 19.

The study found that raising the minimum legal age to 21 would prevent 223,000 premature deaths.

So far 12 states have enacted laws to raise the minimum age to 21, including New Jersey and California. Lawmakers in New York state and Maryland have also approved legislation. In a statement, Altria Group Chief Executive Howard Willard said the company “strongly supports” McConnell’s move, calling it “the most effective action to reverse rising underage e-vapor usage rates.” A representative for British

American Tobacco did not immediately respond to a request for comment. E-cigarette makers are already under pressure from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which laid out plans in March to clamp down on the use of the popular nicotine devices among teens.

Altria made a big bet on e-cigarettes in December with its \$12.8 billion purchase of a 35 percent stake in Juul Labs Inc, which makes a sleek line of devices that became popular among teenagers, prompting an FDA crackdown.

Altria Group has been a major contributor to McConnell’s campaigns, according to data from the Center for Responsive Politics, which tracks money in politics. McConnell’s campaign received \$31,900 from Altria employees or political action committees in the most recent election cycle, making him one of the top four recipients of campaign cash in Congress, according to the data.



A man smokes at the Firefly Music Festival in Dover, Delaware U.S., June 16, 2018. REUTERS/Mark Makela



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**Editor's Choice**



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FILE PHOTO: Urmila Matondkar, Bollywood actress-turned-politician who recently joined India's main opposition Congress party, gestures during her election campaign rally in Mumbai



People wait in queues to cast their votes outside a polling station during the second phase of general election in Hojai



Gayatri, a 24-year-old Master of Engineering graduate who has been unemployed for four months poses during a job fair in Chinchwad



FILE PHOTO: Ukrainian presidential candidate and comedian Volodymyr Zelenskyy gets into a car after undergoing a drugs and alcohol test in Kiev



Tourists take pictures of television reporters working on a sidewalk outside of the Justice Department, after the release of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's report on Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election in Washington



Official binders given to reporters with Special Counsel Robert Mueller's report on Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election are seen in Washington



A statue of Jesus Christ on the cross is pictured during a mass for the celebration of the Last Supper at the Sacre-Coeur Basilica of Montmartre, days after a massive fire devastated large parts of the structure of the gothic Notre-Dame Cathedral, in Paris



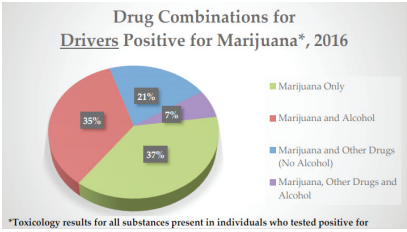
As more states legalize marijuana for medical or recreational use, concern is rising about the risk of people getting behind the wheel while high. The latest highway safety statistics confirm the number of drivers testing positive for pot has increased dramatically -- but driving under the influence of alcohol remains a far more deadly threat.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration survey, conducted in 2013 and 2014, found that the number of drivers with marijuana in their systems grew by nearly 50 percent since 2007, rising from 8.6 percent in 2007 to 12.6 percent in 2014.

Overall, 22 percent of drivers tested positive for some kind of drug that could affect safety. That includes illegal drugs as well as prescription and over-the-counter medications.

While drug-impaired driving was on the rise, NHTSA said the the number of drivers on the road with alcohol in their systems has declined by nearly one-third since 2007. Tougher laws, drunk driving crackdowns and public education campaigns have helped reduce the number of cases by more than three-quarters since the agency began conducting roadside surveys in 1973.

The anonymous surveys gather data in dozens of locations across the country from drivers who agree to participate.



“The rising prevalence of marijuana and other drugs is a challenge to everyone who is dedicated to saving lives and reducing crashes,” NHTSA head Mark Rosekind warned.

The report cited “evidence that marijuana use impairs psychomotor skills, divided attention, lane tracking, and cognitive functions” -- all essential skills for safe driving.

But a separate survey, the largest of its kind, offered another take on the issue -- highlighting the fact that driving under the influence of marijuana may not be nearly as hazardous as the impairment caused by alcohol.

Is It As Risky As Drinking And Driving?

Cannabis Smokers Behind The Wheel Are On The Rise

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



The study assessing the comparative risk of drunk and drugged driving was conducted in Virginia Beach, Virginia, over a 20-month period; it involved the collection of data from more than 3,000 drivers involved in a crash, and more than 6,000 crash-free drivers for comparison.

That survey found that while marijuana users are more likely to be involved in accidents, the increased risk may be largely due to the fact that marijuana users are more likely to be part of demographic groups at higher risk of crashes generally. In particular, marijuana users are more likely to be young men -- a group already at high risk.



“Drivers should never get behind the wheel impaired, and we know that marijuana impairs judgment, reaction times and awareness,” said Jeff Michael, the agency’s associate administrator for re-

search and program development.

One complication to assessing crash risk by drivers who have used marijuana is that it can be detected in the human body for hours and sometimes days after the high from smoking has dissipated. Other studies have shown that a marijuana high typically peaks within 30 minutes and is gone within about three hours after ingestion. But unlike with alcohol, drivers high on pot tend to be aware that they are impaired and try to compensate by driving slowly, avoiding risky actions such as passing other cars, and allowing extra room between vehicles. On the other hand, combining marijuana with alcohol appears to eliminate the pot smoker’s exaggerated caution and to increase driving impairment beyond the effects of either substance alone. In the NHTSA survey, about 8 percent of drivers during weekend nighttime hours were found to have some alcohol in their system, and 1.5 percent were found with .08 percent or higher breath alcohol content - the legal limit in every state. Drivers with any alcohol in their systems and drivers testing greater than .08 were both down by about 30 percent from the previous survey in 2007. Both groups are also down by more than three-quarters since

the first survey in 1973. (Courtesy www.cbsnews.com)

Related

How Long Should You Wait to Drive After Using Recreational Marijuana?



It’s recommended that you should let at least four hours pass between the time you smoke marijuana and the time you drive a car. The window for taking marijuana orally is six hours. However, these guidelines come with a few caveats.

The Trouble With Guidelines

However, it’s difficult to set hard parameters for safe time passed between smoking marijuana and getting behind the wheel because the effects of marijuana vary widely according to potency and tolerance. They are, in short, dose-dependent. So while it is helpful to suggest a window of hours between smoking and driving, it’s even more useful to get into the details.

Don’t Be High

No one should drive while high. If you’re “a little high,” as measured by how strong your buzz is, you shouldn’t get behind the wheel. Many of us think we can drive with a slight high. The first parameter for safe time passed between smoking marijuana and driving is that you shouldn’t be high at all.

Don’t Be Overconfident

Smokers who drive can underestimate the time they need by forgetting these factors:

**There is a period during which you might not be feeling the “high”** — you’re no longer recreating with marijuana — but your senses and reflexes aren’t yet what you’d like them to be for getting

behind the wheel.

**There are levels of being “straight” after smoking that are appropriate to normal driving conditions but not for emergencies.** Skidding on black ice or having to swerve away from a pedestrian stepping into the street from between two parked cars, for example. It’s usually recommended that eight hours should pass between the feeling of euphoria has passed and the moment you drive.



Notice that there’s a certain inconsistency between that recommendation and the one listed further above (that you shouldn’t drive for four hours after smoking).

When recommendations clash, it’s better to go with the more conservative option and decide that you shouldn’t drive for eight hours after smoking marijuana.

A smoker might handle his or her vehicle faultlessly but still be in legal trouble if something goes wrong completely beyond your control.

Marijuana, Driving, and the Law

Don’t make the mistake of thinking that because marijuana might now be legal in your state it’s legal to drive while high. Even if there hasn’t been an accident, if you’re pulled over while driving high you’ll be cited for Driving Under the Influence, just as though you had had a martini.

Laws vary from state to state. Some have a zero-tolerance policy, together with broad interpretive powers granted to the police officer who has pulled you over. Don’t be surprised if the mere presence of weed paraphernalia in your vehicle is enough for a judge to decide in favor of the officer even though you hadn’t smoked in several days.

Conclusion


Marijuana is criticized for leading to a sedentary lifestyle. When it comes to driving, let this criticism become sound advice. The safest place to be high is still on your couch. (Courtesy https://eufloa-colorado.com)

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***Possibly The Largest Caravan Yet***  
**New Caravan Of 12,000  
Migrants Heading To U.S.**



**Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor**

Another massive migrant caravan is on its way to the U.S. from Central America. The possibly largest-ever caravan from Central America has amassed more than 12,000 people, some of who intend to pursue refugee status in Mexico, while many more are headed for the U.S., the New York Times reported Friday. The number in the caravan isn't just an estimate – it's the number of migrants who have requested visas from the Mexican government.

**Dan Bongino**  
√ @dbongino

**Newest Migrant Caravan Grows to More Than 12,000 Members**  
3,793  
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**The migrant caravan that formed on January 15 in Honduras has now grown from 2,000 to over 12,000 members, according to Breitbart.**  
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On Jan. 17, Mexico's new president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has vowed to issue one-year humanitarian visas that will allow migrants to travel and settle in Mexico. It is part of Obrador's policies aimed at reducing migration and spurring job growth in Mexico. As of Thursday, 8,446 adults and 1,897 children had applied for the visas, most of which are Honduras nationals, according to the Washington Post. Obrador's new visa policy is said to be a huge attractor of migrants, though less than 1,000 visas have been granted so far. President Trump tweeted to acknowledge the caravan on Saturday, saying, "We have turned away, at great expense, two major Caravans, but a big one has now formed and is coming. At least 8000 people! If we had a powerful Wall, they wouldn't even try to make the long and dangerous journey. Build the Wall and Crime will Fall!"

**Donald J. Trump**  
√ @realDonaldTrump

We have turned away, at great expense, two major Caravans, but a big one has now formed and is coming. At least 8000 people! If we had a powerful Wall, they wouldn't even try to make the long and dangerous journey. Build the Wall and Crime will Fall!  
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Trump later followed up with, "Only fools, or people with a political agenda, don't want a Wall or Steel Barrier to protect our Country from Crime, Drugs and Human Trafficking. It will happen – it always does!"

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The Mexican government released data showing that 132,000 illegal immigrants were detained throughout 2018. The U.S. Border Patrol captured nearly 400,000 illegal immigrants between Oct. 2017 and Sept. 2018 – before the Central American caravans even began in the fall. Mexican authorities stopped 18,000 migrants in October, and another 12,000 in November. With the new humanitarian visas, they are completely shifting their approach on migration. Thousands of migrants still remain in Tijuana, Mexico, where the last major caravans stopped in their attempt to cross into the U.S. There, migrants are awaiting asylum interviews with U.S. immigration agencies after the U.S. mandated that migrants must remain in Mexico while their asylum cases are pending. Mexico had offered jobs and assistance to migrants in the previous caravans, but the migrants refused, instead wanting to pursue asylum in the U.S. (Courtesy americanmilitarynews.com)

**Related**  
**Mexico Moves to Encourage Caravan Migrants to Stay and Work**



**Migrants in Huixtla, Mexico, try-**

**ing to get a free ride on a sugar cane truck during their journey toward the United States. (Photo/Reuters)**

CIUDAD HIDALGO, Mexico — Mexico's new president has moved decisively to encourage migrants fleeing poverty and violence in Central America to stay and work in Mexico, making it easier for them to get visas and work permits and promoting investments and ambitious public works projects to create jobs. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's policies are already proving to be a magnet for migrants, who are finding it harder to enter the United States given President Trump's antipathy toward immigration. A migrant caravan heading to Mexico from Central America — the largest ever — has already swollen to over 12,000 people, with many saying they intend to remain in Mexico, at least for the time being.

The new Mexican president's generosity toward immigrants, officials say, dovetails with his broader commitment to protect human rights, reduce inequality and prioritize the poor.

Mr. López Obrador's pro-immigrant stance also serves as a dramatic counterpoint to the White House, without directly challenging Mr. Trump. But these policies could ultimately put pressure on the Mexico-United States border, as most in the caravan eventually hope to cross into the United States.



**A Honduran man in Tecun Uman, Guatemala, part of a caravan of Central American migrants, washed his clothes in the Suchiate River, which runs along the Guatemala-Mexico border. (Photo/Getty Images)**

Many in the caravan said they decided to migrate after a decision by the Mexican government to drastically speed up the process for securing a yearlong humanitarian visa that allows migrants to legally travel and work in Mexico. "The humanitarian visa that they're giving

now is the reason we are here," said Carlos del Valle, a Guatemalan teacher who was standing in line with his family this week to apply for the visa on the bridge connecting Guatemala with Mexico. "Later, if possible, we can get to the United States," he said.

Under the streamlined process, which began last week, the government is seeking to issue the humanitarian visa in an average of five days rather than a month. Migration officials said the policy would be permanent.



**Migrants from the caravan playing cards this month to pass the time in the Barretal shelter in Tijuana, Mexico. (Photo/The New York Times)**

The initiative, officials say, is part of the president's strategy to make Mexico's immigration policy more humane, after years of stepped-up deportations under pressure from the United States. But it could also draw even more migrants to trek north to the border with the United States, inflaming tensions with a Trump administration determined to build a border wall and lower immigration numbers.

On Thursday, the Trump administration said it would institute a new policy to return most asylum-seekers to Mexico if they had arrived at the southwest border by land. Under the policy, which is intended to discourage Central Americans from migrating to the United States and to ease pressure on the asylum system, the petitioners would be required to remain in Mexico while they await the outcome of their cases.

The Mexican government initially said it was speeding up the application process for humanitarian visas as an "exception" for the current migrant caravan only. But on Thursday, a spokeswoman with Mexico's national migration agency said the expedited process would be permanent. (Courtesy The New York Times)



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