

Nicholas Ramos: Wisconsin needs more tools to tackle teen vaping epidemic

Posted on Friday, Aug 4, 2023

The column below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.

We were all teenagers once. We know that when it comes to kids and teens experimenting with adult products, they will find a way. But today, easily accessible, illegally-imported, and kid-friendly vaping products are fueling an epidemic in our state. We need to get serious about cracking down on these products and we need more tools if we're going to be successful.

These illegal products are wreaking havoc in our schools and communities, this problem has become so out-of-control that reports show a 2188% increase in disposable vape use amongst high school students since 2019 – much of this fueled by kid-friendly illegal products. Beyond the health impact, the disciplinary actions related to student use of these illegal disposables in our schools are sacrificing precious learning time and teacher resources.

The overwhelming majority of illegal and unauthorized disposable vapes found in Wisconsin gas stations, corner stores, and local smoke shops are primarily imported from China. These disposable nicotine products prey on the youth market with kid-friendly flavors and bright colors. Unlike products approved by the FDA, they are produced with little to no oversight or regulation as to their creation or ingredients before being unleashed on U.S. markets.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

While the FDA has taken recent steps to stop these products from ending up in the

hands of our youth – including expanding enforcement authority to stop these products at ports of entry – this crisis demands more action. We must keep the pressure on the FDA and encourage Congress and the Biden Administration to stop doing piece-meal enforcement and provide the necessary resources to keep these products out of the hands of our kids.

Federal legislation like H.R. 90, which is co-sponsored by Representative Gwen Moore, is a good step in directly addressing the prevalence of these flavored vapes. We have to advocate for its passage as one tool which will help keep our children safe, but we need a comprehensive solution.

It is our responsibility as a society to protect our kids from danger, especially when that danger could come at the cost of their health and potentially their lives. We must support and encourage all efforts by the Biden Administration and FDA to get flavored disposable vapes in kid-friendly flavors off the streets to protect our children from predatory foreign companies seeking to line their pockets at the cost of our nation's future.

-Nick Ramos is a lawyer, advocate, and organizer who previously spent four years as the Community Outreach Liaison for Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, providing high-quality constituent services and implementing programs dedicated to enhancing the lives of the local veteran and homeless populations. Nick's love for civic engagement began during his time in law school, when he participated in voter protection efforts across the state of Wisconsin during the 2016 election cycle and developed strategies to expand voting while recruiting and training hundreds of volunteers. Nick received his B.A. in Philosophy from Miami University and his J.D. from Marquette University Law School.