

Ohio Chamber of Commerce backs override of DeWine veto on law to hamstring local tobacco rules

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COLUMBUS, Ohio – Business interests are backing an Ohio House plan to override [Gov. Mike DeWine's veto](#) of a proposal that blocks cities from setting tobacco rules that are stricter than state law.

After [the House voted late on Wednesday](#) to begin the override process over the objections of anti-smoking groups, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce said in a statement that it was supporting the move.

CEO Steve Stivers said in a prepared statement that, without the override, Ohio would have a “piecemeal approach” to tobacco regulation from 938 different municipal governments.

“Local retailers have had to weather the highest levels of inflation in 40 years, and they already operate under razor-thin profit margins— the average Ohio convenience store stands to lose tens of thousands of dollars from these bans,” Stivers said.

The House voted 60-31 on the override. It still needs a three-fifths majority vote in the Ohio Senate to usurp DeWine's veto of the provision that was part of the state budget passed last summer. The Senate does not have any more sessions scheduled for 2023 but can take up the measure early next year.

A spokesman for DeWine declined to comment.

If the override is successful, it could overturn bans on sales of flavored tobacco that at least three Ohio cities already have adopted. Columbus, Bexley and Toledo have flavored tobacco bans, and [Cleveland has been discussing one](#).

During discussion on the House floor on Wednesday, state Rep. Jon Cross, a Hardin County Republican, described the override as a “holiday gift” that will keep Ohio

“open for business.” House Minority Leader Allison Russo told reporters that the override was simply a “win for the tobacco lobby.”

The tobacco industry has fought for years to get preemption laws on the books, while anti-smoking groups and the American Cancer Society has fought against those that could make it easier to obtain tobacco, including those that ban tobacco sales to anyone under the age of 21.

“Policymaking at the local level allows innovation and creative problem solving that builds on local strengths and addresses local needs. Restricting the freedom of local leaders to pass tobacco control laws that go beyond state law only benefits Big Tobacco,” Leo Almeida, of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, said in a statement late Wednesday.

Stivers said the chamber is “committed to eliminating the state’s health disparities through the promotion of healthy behaviors and targeted outreach to at-risk communities — just not at the expense of our local business owners.”

DeWine vetoed the provision in the two-year state budget that lawmakers adopted over the summer. It was functionally similar to a bill the Ohio General Assembly passed, and that DeWine vetoed, at this point last year. When DeWine vetoed the legislation nearly a year ago, he described an epidemic of young people smoking brought on by the availability of flavored tobacco. At the time, his administration said [cigarettes cost the state’s Medicaid program \\$1.85 billion per year](#).