



# Attorney General Urges Biden To Implement Ban On Menthol Cigarettes and Flavored Cigars

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**CHICAGO** — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today co-led a coalition of 21 attorneys general, along with California Attorney General Rob Bonta, Connecticut Attorney General William Tong and New York Attorney General Letitia James, in submitting a [letter](#) urging the Biden administration to complete its review and swiftly implement proposed regulations prohibiting the sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars. Raoul and the attorneys general argue that the [proposed FDA Rules](#), which are supported by ample evidence, are years overdue.



In their letter to the White House Office of Management and Budget, Raoul and the attorneys general highlight calls for action from civil rights and public health groups to remove menthol tobacco products from the marketplace to protect public health and address the systemic and disproportionate impact of these products on minority communities and other vulnerable populations, including young people.

“I am asking the FDA to ban menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars because even though cigarette use has decreased over the years, menthol-flavored cigarettes continue to attract and addict new smokers – particularly youth and minority smokers,” Raoul said. “The FDA’s own findings underscore the need to ban menthol cigarettes, which could save thousands of lives and support state efforts to combat youth smoking.”

Overwhelming scientific evidence leaves no doubt that menthol cigarettes have far-reaching adverse impacts on public health, resulting in more smoking and more death and disease from tobacco use. Tobacco companies add menthol to cigarettes and cigars, which disguises the harsh taste of cigarettes. As a result, the flavoring remains a primary reason young people initiate and become addicted to smoking. Menthol cigarette use is also disproportionately high among LGBTQ+ smokers, smokers with mental health problems, and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations.

For decades, the tobacco industry has aggressively marketed menthol cigarettes in Black communities through heavy advertising and promotional campaigns. As a result, in 2020, approximately 81% of non-Hispanic Black adults smoked menthol cigarettes, compared to 34% of non-Hispanic White adults.

In the letter, Raoul and the coalition urge the Biden administration to finalize its review of the FDA's proposed rules without delay. As state and territorial chief legal officers, the attorneys general address unfounded claims that the proposed menthol ban will increase illicit trade or criminalize the individual purchase, possession, or use of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars. The coalition argues that the FDA's proposed rules are critical steps for advancing health equity and protecting public health. Moreover, banning menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars will bring the country closer to achieving the Cancer Moonshot, President Biden's historic push "to end cancer as we know it."

The letter is part of Attorney General Raoul's ongoing work to protect youth from the health dangers of tobacco and e-cigarette use. In 2021, Raoul co-led a coalition of attorneys general urging the FDA to ban flavored tobacco products and strengthen e-cigarette guidance. That same year, the Illinois Legislature passed Raoul's legislation that prohibits companies from marketing e-cigarettes to minors, misleading advertising and the sale of adulterated e-cigarettes.

Last year, Raoul announced a \$462 million multistate settlement with Juul Labs Inc. (Juul), one of the nation's largest manufacturers of e-cigarettes. The settlement provided critical injunctive relief to prevent Juul from marketing and selling its products to youth. In 2020, Raoul entered into a consent decree with Juice Man LLC to resolve a lawsuit over allegations the company developed and marketed its products to attract minors. The consent decree effectively prohibits the company from operating in the state of Illinois.

For more information and free resources to help quit tobacco, please visit the Illinois Tobacco Quitline website or call 1-866-QUIT-YES.

Joining Attorney General Raoul, Attorney General Bonta, Attorney General James and Attorney General Tong in filing the letter are the attorneys general of Arizona, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island and South Dakota.