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# Tobacco licensing seems effective

## *Pasadena has seen drop in sales to minors*

By Alison Hewitt, Staff Writer

As the county considers creating a new tobacco-sellers' license, some cities and counties are already reaping the benefits.

Cities like Pasadena have already rolled out a tobacco license like the one being considered by the county Board of Supervisors. The annual license fees paid by tobacco-product retailers fund an inspection program that cracks down on stores selling cigarettes to minors.

In Pasadena, 23 percent of tobacco retailers once sold cigarettes to minors, said Statrice Wilmore, coordinator of the city's Tobacco Control Program. The licensing and inspection program has improved that.

"After the ordinance was adopted, it has been reduced to 6 percent," Wilmore told the county supervisors at their meeting Tuesday. "Actually ... the last seven compliance check operations have been zero percent illegal sales. We've never had that."

In unincorporated Los Angeles County, where the county's licensing program would take effect, more than 30 percent of retailers sell to minors, according to county figures.

However, the supervisors postponed a vote on the issue to Dec. 11 in order to review whether the proposed \$235-a-year license fee would be enough to support an inspection

program.

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"There's a state license with a one-time fee of \$100 that retailers pay to the state, but that doesn't pay for enforcement at the local level," said Linda Aragon, the director of the county's Tobacco Control and

Prevention Program.

Pasadena already faced that problem, where council members bumped the original yearly fee to \$218 from \$135 because the program couldn't sustain itself, she said.

More than 40 people attended the county meeting on Tuesday to support tobacco licensing, including representatives from the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, and several high school students from the Alliance to Keep Kids Tobacco Free and local substance-abuse prevention group Day One.

Nicole Bernard, a 15-year-old from Pasadena High School, said she had participated in Day One stings, testing stores to see whether they would sell cigarettes to her.

"People asked me for my ID," Bernard told the supervisors. "After realizing that I was a minor, they still continued to sell to me ... this year alone, five out of seven stores sold to me."

As many jurisdictions as possible should implement the tobacco retail licensing program, or TRL, the Altadena teen said.

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"A lot of young people in Pasadena go to Altadena to buy cigarettes," she said, "because Pasadena already has their TRL ordinance."

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