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# Texas could soon increase the legal age to buy tobacco, though active military members might be exempt

Senate Bill 21 passed Tuesday, raising the legal purchasing age for tobacco products from 18 to 21. But its author amended the legislation to exclude active military from the age raise.

BY **ELIZABETH BYRNE** APRIL 9, 2019 6 PM



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The Texas Senate on Tuesday passed Senate Bill 21 in a 20-11 vote after state Sen. [Joan Huffman](#), R-Houston, amended her own legislation to include the military exemption. State Sen. [John Whitmire](#) of Houston was the only Democrat who voted against the bill.

The bill [faced some opposition from Republicans](#) who criticized the age raise because, they said, it denied the right for young adults who enlist in the military to choose to use tobacco products, *The Dallas Morning News* [reported](#) Tuesday. The exception for military members allows Texans who are 18 and older and serving in the armed forces to purchase tobacco products if they have a valid military ID.

A companion bill in the lower chamber passed unanimously out of a Texas House committee last month but did not have the exception for active military. The author of the House bill, Rep. [John Zerwas](#), R-Richmond, said he would accept an exemption for active military as it would still keep tobacco products away from high school students, according to the Dallas newspaper. Zerwas was not immediately available for comment.

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Texas 21, a coalition of organizations aiming to raise the tobacco purchase legal age to 21, released a statement opposing the military exemption after the Senate amendment. Claudia Rodas, a regional director of Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, said in written statement that the coalition will work with legislators to understand the need to include the military in the bill. She said the goal is a law that “protects all young Texans, including those who are willing to die to protect our country.”

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