



White House decision to delay action on menthol keeps our communities in harm's way

It was announced yesterday that the White House is once again putting off taking much needed action on menthol. It's been nearly two years since the U.S. Food and Drug Administration first announced proposals to remove menthol cigarettes and all flavored cigars from the market, and the new delay will move a final decision to at least March. The following is a statement from Lorraine Lathen, Director of the Wisconsin African American Tobacco Prevention Network and Wisconsin Tobacco Prevention & Poverty Network:

"Yesterday's news that action on menthol has been pushed back was a damaging blow to our community. The proposed actions on menthol and flavored cigarettes have strong support from many in the community and have the potential to profoundly improve the health and well-being of all, especially African Americans and other groups that have been targeted with these products by the tobacco industry, including youths. Menthol cigarettes in particular continue to have a devastating impact on our community, as nearly 9 of 10 African American smokers in the state use them, which contributes greatly to the health disparities they experience. Although many want to quit, the menthol additive has made menthols easier to start and harder to quit."

Particularly disheartening about the decision to delay a final ruling until at least March is that it comes on the heels of the tobacco industry's ramped up efforts to spread misinformation in the community about the potential impact that removing menthols from the market would have. Shockingly, one of the tobacco industry and its lobbyist's key talking points is that the proposed policies would lead to over-policing of the Black community, which is a blatant example of the tobacco industry exploiting real issues in the community related to police brutality and mass incarceration. The FDA ban on menthol polices the manufacturers and retailers of menthol, not the people who smoke them. It would also save more than 650,000 lives, including more than 200,000 Black lives.

Although we are disappointed at the delay, it will not slow our efforts to increase awareness on cessation services available for the many thousands of Wisconsin residents who want to quit smoking menthols or other tobacco products. According to the CDC, if menthol cigarettes were no longer available, an estimated [17,200 additional adults in Wisconsin](#) who smoke would quit smoking.

*The Wisconsin African American Tobacco Prevention Network and the Wisconsin Tobacco Prevention & Poverty Network will continue to educate the community about the harmful campaign that the tobacco industry has waged against our communities for decades, resulting in the deaths of millions and threatening future generations. **For free help to quit tobacco call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-Quit-Now.***