



A message from Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

To protect kids, remove all flavored e-cigs from the market – including mint and menthol.



Alayna Treene Sep 22, 2019

GOP allies warn vaping ban will sink Trump in 2020



Illustration: Lazaro Gamio/Axios

Conservative leaders are circulating data to White House staff that claims adults who vape will turn on President Trump if he follows through with his planned ban on

flavored e-cigarettes, Axios has learned.

Between the lines: The data (shown below) reveals that the number of adult vapers in key battleground states greatly outweighs the margins by which Trump won those states in 2016 — and they argue it could cost him reelection.

What we're hearing: "While parents may be concerned about e-cigarettes, the people who genuinely care about vaping as a voting issue so far outweighs the number of people Trump needs to win in 2020 that they are royally screwing themselves by doing this," Paul Blair, the director of strategic initiatives at Americans for Tax Reform, tells me.

- Suburban moms concerned about vaping "don't have the same voter intensity on this as adult vapers do," an industry lobbyist said.
- Florida, which Trump won by 113,000 voters, had about 873,000 adult vapers in 2016. They reason that if 1 in 8 vapers turn against Trump in 2020 because he foreclosed their vaping options, it could jeopardize the election.

Why it matters: If Trump backs away from proposed enforcement policy, it would be the second time in recent weeks that political concerns prompted him to dial back government regulations.

- Trump's openness this summer to expanded background checks cooled after the gun lobby and campaign advisers warned about bad internal polling.

Our thought bubble: There are four unsubstantiated assumptions about adult vapers in the case being presented to Trump:

1. They start out as Trump voters.
2. They wouldn't vape anymore if they couldn't get the flavors.
3. They are single-issue voters around vaping rights.



4. The eventual Democratic nominee would be more vape-friendly.



Still, the math can't be totally ignored, especially in places like Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin where Trump's 2016 win margins were so narrow and the number of adult vapers is relatively high.

By the numbers: More than 4 million people in swing states regularly used e-cigarettes in 2016, according to FDA-funded survey data published last year in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

- Industry experts say that number has increased significantly in recent years.

Comparing adult vapers and 2016 presidential election win margins in battleground states

	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ADULT VAPERS		2016 ELECT WIN MARGI
Florida	873k		+1:
Ohio	558k		
Pennsylvania	455k		+44k
Michigan	418k		+11k
Georgia	390k		
North Carolina	369k		
Arizona	302k		+91
Wisconsin	265k		+23k
Minnesota	169k	+45k Dem.	
Nevada	145k	+27k	
New Hampshire	66k	+3k	
Maine	48k	+22k	

 Data: Mirboulouk, et. al, 2016, "Prevalence and Distribution of E-Cigarette Use Among U.S. Adults: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2016", Census Bureau, Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections; Chart: Andrew Witherspoon/Axios





Behind the scenes: The White House scheduled a listening session with conservative groups last Thursday after receiving intense backlash from GOP leaders and industry execs following the announcement of the ban.

- **Among the invitees:** The Competitive Enterprise Institute, the Goldwater Institute, AFT and the Vapor Technology Association.
- But roughly 24 hours after invitations went out, the meeting was canceled.
- "They're in chaos mode on this stuff because the backlash has been so resoundingly overpowering," one invitee said.
- A White House official says the meeting is expected to be rescheduled.

The bottom line: The political pressure points regarding the ban have gotten Trump's attention.

- Shortly after the proposed ban was announced, Trump tweeted that he still likes vaping as an alternative to cigarettes.
- Trump's 2020 campaign manager Brad Parscale also hit back at a Trump follower who tweeted that banning vaping products is "not on brand with MAGA."
- One administration official said the tweets were prompted by a flood of criticism from conservative leaders.

E-CIGARETTE >



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