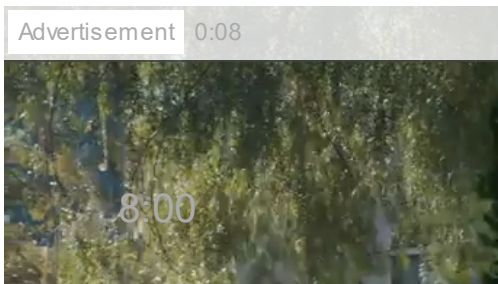


Politics

# White House Cancels Pro-Vaping Meeting as Illness Cases Rise

- U.S. says 530 people are ill from vaping-related lung ailment
- Official says meeting is postponed due to scheduling conflict



Can We Actually Ban Vaping?

By Jennifer Jacobs

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The White House called off a meeting with supporters of vaping as federal health officials said 530 people have fallen ill from a mysterious lung ailment related to use of e-cigarettes.

The meeting, originally set for 10 a.m. on Thursday, was billed as “a conversation with the Senior White House Officials on Electronic Cigarettes,” according to an invitation. A White House official who asked not to be identified said the meeting was postponed due to a conflict and would be rescheduled.

Seven people have died from the vaping-related illness, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said at a briefing Thursday. The number of illnesses is up from 380 confirmed and probable cases that the government reported last week.

Officials said they still haven’t determined a cause of the ailment, and that there doesn’t appear to be one product or substance involved in all instances. Cases have been identified in 38 states.

President Donald Trump has directed the Food and Drug Administration to remove vaping products with flavors other than tobacco from the market, largely out of concern that the flavored products are popular with children.

Paul Blair of Americans for Tax Reform, whose organization received an invitation to the White House meeting, warned that banning flavored vaping would hurt Trump politically. Blair would not say whether his group receives financial support from the electronic cigarette industry.

“When you look at a state like Pennsylvania, where Trump only won by 44,000 votes, data suggests that there are more than 457,000 adult vapers in the state,” said Blair, the organization’s director of strategic initiatives.

“Those people have family members, friends, and neighbors that all know how important flavored e-cigarettes are to a smoker trying to quit,” he added. “It doesn’t take a genius to understand that screwing this up by banning most e-cigarettes on the market could cost Trump the election.”

Parallel to the public health investigation into the illnesses, the Food and Drug Administration’s enforcement arm has also opened a criminal probe focusing on the vaping industry’s supply chain, said Mitchell Zeller, director of the Center for Tobacco Products at the FDA, who spoke at the briefing.

The FDA said Sept. 11 that flavored vaping products would be banned within 30 days. Manufacturers may be able to return them to the market after a regulatory review of whether flavored products are beneficial to public health.

Trump and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said on Sept. 11 that the FDA would move to take all nontobacco-flavored e-cigarettes off the market within 30 days. Manufacturers will have to apply to the FDA to resume sales of flavored products, and will have to show that the public health benefits outweigh the risks.