

Missouri Wants to Ban Teen Tanning

Missouri will be joining the ranks of 16 states that are considering legislation to limit or ban teens' use of indoor tanning salons. Legislative proposals range from requiring parental consent, to requiring a doctor's note, to outright banning of minors.

This is in addition to the 29 states which already have restrictive indoor tanning laws for teens on the lawbooks.

Proponents of such limitations say it's for the protection of minors, much like the cigarette sales laws. But opponents disagree – arguing this goes too far. “You cannot regulate everything in this world,” says one state senator in Florida who voted against such bill when it came up in his state. “I suppose we could say the same thing and outlaw tanning on the beach.” Salon owners emphasize that tanning beds are much safer than tanning outdoors because it's a controlled environment, and certified operators are trained to help tanners use the beds safely. “It's a lot easier to get a sunburn when you're outside,” says John Overstreet, executive director of the Washington-based Indoor Tanning Association which represents approximately 20,000 tanning salons. “In a tanning salon you know exactly what you're getting.”

Dermatologists say tanners are more susceptible to skin damage prior to the age of 18, but indoor tanning advocates believe that educating users is adequate to avoid the overuse that leads to unhealthy burning. Many salons already voluntarily require parental permission for minors who use their facilities.

It is estimated that well over two million teens use indoor tanning salons annually, and the loss of revenue is certainly a concern for salon owners. But the ITA is quick to point out its also a violation of parental rights – and just bad politics. In a formal statement opposing the ban to teen tanning, they call such legislation an “unnecessary intrusion of government in our daily lives.”

Over-regulation is a serious threat and one that could seriously hinder our industry. So, if you live in Missouri or know anyone in Missouri, I urge you to write a letter and encourage your friends to write letters speaking out against this ban.

To learn more about legislation in your state, contact your local government or visit the Indoor Tanning Association website .