

The PUTNAM COUNTY NEWS

and RECORDER

Tobacco 21 Law OK'd by Putnam Legislature

By PCNR Staff | on October 02, 2018

By Eric Gross

By a 6-3 vote, members of the Putnam Legislature approved the Tobacco 21 Act on Tuesday evening before a sparse audience at the historic Putnam Courthouse.

When the tally was announced, applause and cheers rang out in the rear of the courtroom where health officials, representatives of the Cancer Society and other proponents of the bill were seated.

Legislator Barbara Scuccimarra, who pushed long and hard for the legislation after it cleared her Health Committee, smiled.

“We are working together to protect our children because Putnam is facing a crisis. This law will prevent our kids from getting tobacco products,” she said.

Joining Scuccimarra in voting for the bill were Legislators William Gouldman, Carl Albano, Joseph Castellano, Amy Sayegh and Neal Sullivan while Legislators Toni Addonizio, Ginny Nacerino and Paul Jonke opposed.

Jonke agreed that smoking kills but he called the bill “feel good legislation,” adding: “This is sending the wrong message to our young people.”

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Government Relations Director Julie Hart noted that “Tobacco 21 makes sense given 96 percent of smokers begin this deadly addiction before turning 21.” She also said, “We are thrilled Putnam County has put health before the profits of Big Tobacco and the vaping industry.”

The legislation also covers the sale of vaping products to young people which Sullivan described as the “real epidemic that is finally being addressed.”

The bill is now expected to be signed into law by County Executive MaryEllen Odell.

The measure had been tabled during its last trip to the full Legislature, an unexpected move and something of a defeat for its backers. Some lawmakers were especially concerned that small shops not be unduly punished by the law’s penalty provisions. Further committee hearings led to changes that brought along a majority of lawmakers for this round.