



Relationship Building: A Key Task for Retailers

The number of local government ordinances that ban or restrict the sale of tobacco products has increased significantly in the past several years. Retailers need to develop relationships with their local elected officials and educate them about the retail sale of tobacco products.

Steps to Develop Relationships with Local Lawmakers

- Visit your city or town's website and find the list of the city council or town board members and their contact information.
- One of the best ways for an elected official to get to know you and your retail business is to invite a lawmaker to tour your store. A store tour gives you the opportunity to introduce your store employees, discuss how many people your store employs, explain your business model, describe the potential impact if tobacco restrictions, sales prohibitions, or higher taxes are enacted, and outline the support that your store provides to the local community.
- Another excellent way to establish a relationship with lawmakers is to visit them at their city office. During the visit, you can share the same kind of information about your business listed above if the official were to tour your store.
- Many lawmakers hold town hall meetings and have open office hours during the year which is a good time to talk with them about your retail business.
- After an initially relationship is established, it is important to stay in touch with lawmakers several times throughout the year.