

THE VAPOR TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION: **New and Innovative Leadership in the Vapor Industry**

Over the course of the past five years, vapor technology has been one of the fastest-growing industries in the U.S., in large part driven by small and mid-size businesses in local communities across the country. Now, as regulators and legislators at the highest levels of government are on the precipice of making industry-changing decisions, vapor technology leaders from across the U.S. and the world have come together to launch the Vapor Technology Association (VTA) with the simple goal of giving a voice to the industry as a whole.

More than 70 members strong and growing, VTA represents manufacturers, importers, wholesalers, distributors, suppliers and retailers who have played a significant role in developing innovative and quality vapor products that provide adult consumers with a safer alternative to traditional combustible products.

One of the biggest challenges we face as an industry—and one that our industry has been outflanked on up until this point—is the rampant misinformation disseminated about our technology. Let's be clear: vapor products are not only a safer alternative to traditional combustible products, but they also provide thousands

upon thousands of Americans with a viable path to reducing tobacco smoking, and even quitting altogether.

So it should surprise no one that FDA Center for Tobacco Products Director Mitch Zeller, a lifelong antismoking advocate, stated: "If we could get all those people [who smoke] to completely switch all of their cigarettes to noncombustible cigarettes, it would be good for public health."

But what about our institutional health groups? Yes, groups such as the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association and American Heart Association must be applauded for the great work that they have done over the years to reduce the number of smokers. Still, even with all the antismoking advertisements, education campaigns, and the ubiquitous over-the-counter availability of nicotine gum and nicotine patches, 43 million adults are still addicted to tobacco cigarettes and nearly half a million smokers are dying in the U.S. every year. At some point these groups must recognize the limitations of their abstinence campaign against all things tobacco.

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scientific evidence, these groups have decided that they are going to do everything they can to kill the hope of vapor products. “Unscientific” does not go far enough in describing the types of messages that these groups and their allies are disseminating. Rather, “dangerous” is a more apt term.

We know this because there is a large and growing body of research that proves the promise of vapor products. We know this because the *entire public health community* of Great Britain, led by the British government and physicians groups, has reached the scientific conclusion based on its extensive review of research that electronic cigarettes are 95 percent safer than tobacco cigarettes.

Blatant misinformation and “junk science” has been circulated in the public domain for far too long by these once-advocates of public health. Rather than embrace the hope that vapor products provide, they mislead American citizens and our policymakers. After all, what could be easier than claiming that the tobacco-boogeyman is lurking around every corner, even if it is not? And how facile is it to cry, “we just don’t know what’s in them” as a

justification for rejecting the entire category when the research is already available to them? You see, the common thread between denigration out of ignorance and calling for regulation based on fear is, in a word, demagoguery. But, as history has shown, demagoguery has never saved a single life and has never produced sound public policy.

One of VTA’s primary missions is to fight unreasonable regulations at the federal and state level. That is not to say that VTA and its members are not committed to strict industry standards. On the contrary—we must ensure the quality of our products. So while the U.S. federal government is falling behind the rest of the world, VTA is working with the international community, including the International Organization for Standardization and the European Committee for Standardization, to establish a set of standards to guide the vapor industry.

Vapor products are the future, and the future is here. This is the first time we have seen a game-changing technology that has the potential to put a significant dent in the 43 million adult smokers of traditional tobacco products.

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Vapor technology is a growing industry comprised of the best that America has to offer. We are small businesses. We are jobs. We are entrepreneurs. We are what is next in technological innovation. It is time that our story is heard.

Tony Abboud is VTA’s national legislative director.

EDITOR’S NOTE:
For a related feature on VTA, see p. 78.

