

## MENTHOL CIGARETTE BAN

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) urges state legislators to enact bans on the sale of menthol cigarettes. This policy brief highlights the disproportionate impact of menthol tobacco products on the Black community. Flavored tobacco has contributed to smoking-related health disparities in the Black community, and is exacerbated by targeted marketing practices by tobacco companies. A state-level ban on menthol cigarettes represents a critical step towards addressing these injustices and improving public health outcomes for Black Americans.

### Background:

Menthol cigarettes are a significant public health concern, particularly within the Black community. In fact, it is well established that one of the leading causes of death for African Americans is tobacco-related chronic illness. Studies show that not only does menthol lead to greater nicotine dependence, but also makes it harder to quit smoking. The targeted marketing of menthol cigarettes to Black individuals has contributed to about 77% of Black smokers using menthol cigarettes, compared to 23% of white smokers. This statistic is no accident- it is the result of decades of marketing strategies by tobacco companies. Menthol use has resulted in increased rates of lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke among Black Americans.

In October 2023, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) proposed rules banning the sale and manufacturing of menthol cigarettes. Today, these rules are still under review and have not been finalized. However, a ballot initiative banning flavored tobacco products (including menthol) was signed into law in California in 2020. Tobacco companies sued the State, but the US Supreme Court ultimately declined to hear the challenge, leaving the State law in place.

### Recommendations:

Enact Statewide Bans: Implement comprehensive bans on the sale of menthol cigarettes and related products.

- Support Tobacco Cessation Programs: Increase funding for tobacco cessation programs, with a focus on those serving Black communities, to help current smokers quit.
- Educational Campaigns: Launch public health campaigns to raise awareness about the specific dangers of menthol cigarettes and available resources for quitting.
- Research and Monitoring: Support research on the impact of menthol tobacco on public health and monitor the outcomes of bans in other states and localities.

The NAACP calls on state legislators to take decisive action by banning menthol cigarettes to address a critical public health and racial justice issue. By doing so, states can take a significant step towards reducing health disparities and protecting the well-being of Black communities.