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Alabama Kids Will Kick Butts – and Juul – on March 20 *State Leaders Challenged to Fight Skyrocketing Epidemic of Youth E-Cigarette Use*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in Alabama will unite against tobacco use on March 20 as they join thousands of young people nationwide to mark Kick Butts Day, an annual day of youth activism sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. More than 1,000 events are planned across the United States (see below for a list of local events).

This year, kids are focused on kicking Juul, the e-cigarette that has become enormously popular among youth across the country.

While cigarette smoking among high school students nationwide has fallen to 8.1 percent, e-cigarette use among high schoolers rose by an alarming 78 percent in 2018 alone – to 20.8 percent of the student population. In 2018, more than 3.6 million middle and high school students used e-cigarettes. U.S. public health leaders have called youth e-cigarette use an “epidemic” that is addicting a new generation of kids.

In Alabama, 24.5 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes, while 14 percent smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 8,600 lives in Alabama and costs the state \$1.9 billion in health care bills each year.

On Kick Butts Day, youth and health advocates are calling for strong action to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic. In particular, they are calling on the Food and Drug Administration, states and cities to ban all flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes in flavors like cotton candy, gummy bear and mango that tempt kids. Other effective strategies to reduce youth tobacco use include laws raising the tobacco sale age to 21, significant tobacco tax increases, comprehensive smoke-free laws and well-funded tobacco prevention programs.

“This year on Kick Butts Day, we’re challenging policy makers at every level to do their part to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic and continue driving down youth tobacco use,” said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “We cannot allow e-cigarettes, especially Juul, to addict another generation and reverse the enormous progress we’ve made in reducing youth tobacco use.”

Key facts about e-cigarettes include:

- The main cause of the youth e-cigarette epidemic is Juul, which looks like a computer flash drive, is small and easy to hide, delivers a powerful dose of nicotine, and comes in kid-friendly flavors like mango, fruit and mint. According to the manufacturer, each Juul “pod” (cartridge) delivers as much nicotine as a pack of 20 cigarettes.
- E-cigarettes pose serious health risks for kids. [The U.S. Surgeon General](#) has found that youth use of nicotine in any form – including e-cigarettes – is unsafe, causes addiction and can harm

the developing adolescent brain, affecting learning, memory and attention. Studies also show that young people who use e-cigarettes are more likely to become cigarette smokers.

On Kick Butts Day, youth join in creative events including signing pledges to be tobacco-free, learning about the harmful chemicals in tobacco products and organizing rallies at state capitols.

In Alabama, activities include:

On March 19, students from **Spain Park High School** in **Birmingham** will listen to a presentation by the University of Birmingham-Alabama's Youth Tobacco Prevention Program on the dangers of vaping and tobacco use. The students will then spread the message to their peers through social media platforms. Time: 8:15 AM. Location: Spain Park High School, 4700 Jaguar Drive, Birmingham. Contact: Jason Gaston (205) 439-1054.

Students from **Red Bay High School** in **Red Bay** will participate in an anti-tobacco rally featuring presentations from state health officials and student-led informational activities. Time: 8:30 AM. Location: Red Bay High School, 800 8th Street E, Red Bay. Contact: Christopher Hargett (256) 398-4910.

Students from **Phil Campbell High School** in **Phil Campbell** will participate in a school assembly featuring a guest speaker discussing the dangers of tobacco use. The school will also have a series of anti-tobacco informational activities throughout the school, including posters, a survey on student tobacco use and anti-smoking ribbons for the students to wear. Time: 8:30 AM. Location: Phil Campbell High School, 65 School Avenue, Phil Campbell. Contact: Libby DeVaney (256) 331-2150.

Youth with **Decatur Youth Services** in **Decatur** will create displays in prominent locations such as City Hall and the public library to promote awareness of the dangers of e-cigarettes/vaping. They will gather on the busiest intersections in the city with signs to get out their message to community members. Time: 6:30 AM – 8:00 AM. Locations: corners of Highway 67 (Beltline Road) and Spring Avenue in front of CVS Pharmacy; Austin High School, 1625 Danville Road SW; the Delano Park entrance on US Highway 31; all locations in Decatur. Contact: Theresa Burrow (256) 318-5714.

Students from **Dothan High School** in **Dothan** will hold a Star Wars-themed rally to educate students on the dangers of e-cigarettes. Time: 3:30 PM. Location: Dothan High School, 1236 S. Oates Street, Dothan. Contact: Chris Payne (334) 805-0463.

On March 22, students from **Francis Marion School** in **Marion** will participate in an anti-tobacco rally featuring a tobacco scavenger hunt, a blood drive, tobacco information table and tobacco re-enactment skits. Time: 8:00 AM. Location: Francis Marion School, 101 Hubbard Drive, Marion. Contact: Mercedes Lightfoot (205) 609-8560.

All events will take place March 20 unless otherwise indicated. For a full list of Kick Butts Day activities in Alabama, visit www.kickbuttsday.org/map. Additional information about tobacco, including state-by-state statistics, can be found at www.tobaccofreekids.org.

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