

U.S.

From Gas Taxes to Vaping Rules, New State Laws Take Effect Across U.S.

Laws also target electric scooters, gun regulation and texting while driving



Drivers wait in long lines Sunday in Van Nuys, Calif., to try to save money ahead of a gasoline-tax increase. PHOTO: GENE BLEVINS/ZUMA PRESS

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A number of laws enacted in state legislatures across the U.S. took effect Monday, following the end of legislative sessions for many states. The laws ranged from increased gas taxes to restrictions on distracted driving and new regulations on tobacco, vaping and electric scooters.

Here is a look at some of the newest laws in the land:

Drivers in a number of states will now pay higher taxes on gas as part of a broader push to fund infrastructure improvements. In Illinois, the gas tax has doubled to 38 cents from 19 cents, making it the largest increase for any of these states, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, a state and federal tax policy think tank. Ohio has the second-largest increase, rising 10.5 cents a gallon, and California's tax jumps 5.6 cents a gallon. Maryland and Michigan are among other states that also saw increases.

Vaping and tobacco products took a hit in several states, as new laws restrict who can buy them and where they can be consumed. In Virginia, the minimum age to purchase tobacco, nicotine and vaping products rose to 21 years old from 18. A similar law has gone into effect in Illinois. In Colorado, vaping is now banned from indoor public areas or near them, and Florida prohibits vaping in indoor workplaces. Vermont has added a 92% tax on e-cigarettes, while New Mexico has implemented a 12.5% tax on e-cigarettes, not long after a new law restricting their use indoors went into effect.

A range of gun-related legislation is now in place from coast to coast. In California, a state with some of the most restrictive gun regulations in the country, background checks are now required when buying ammunition. The new law prompted a surge in sales before it went into effect Monday.

More background checks and training requirements for purchasing semiautomatic assault rifles took effect in Washington state, as did federal background-check requirements for purchasing firearms in New Mexico. In South Dakota, residents can now carry concealed handguns without a permit. And in Florida, paramedics and medical professionals are allowed to carry firearms in “high-risk incidents.” Tennessee, meanwhile, removed an ammunition tax.

Electric scooters are getting a share of regulations, too. Tennessee has prohibited operating electric scooters while under the influence or speeding past 15 miles an hour. In Indiana, scooters are now banned from interstate highways. More operating restrictions and regulations on these scooters are in place in Virginia and Kentucky, where new laws went into effect in late June.

Several states, including Virginia, Florida, Tennessee and Illinois, have also enacted laws on texting while driving.

Other new laws include an increase in the minimum age for marriage—to 17 from 16—in Georgia. And starting Monday, it is illegal to organize or participate in a competition centered on killing coyotes in New Mexico.

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Corrections & Amplifications

On July 1, Connecticut saw an increase on its diesel tax rate. An earlier version of this article incorrectly said there was an increase on its gas tax. (July 2, 2019)

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