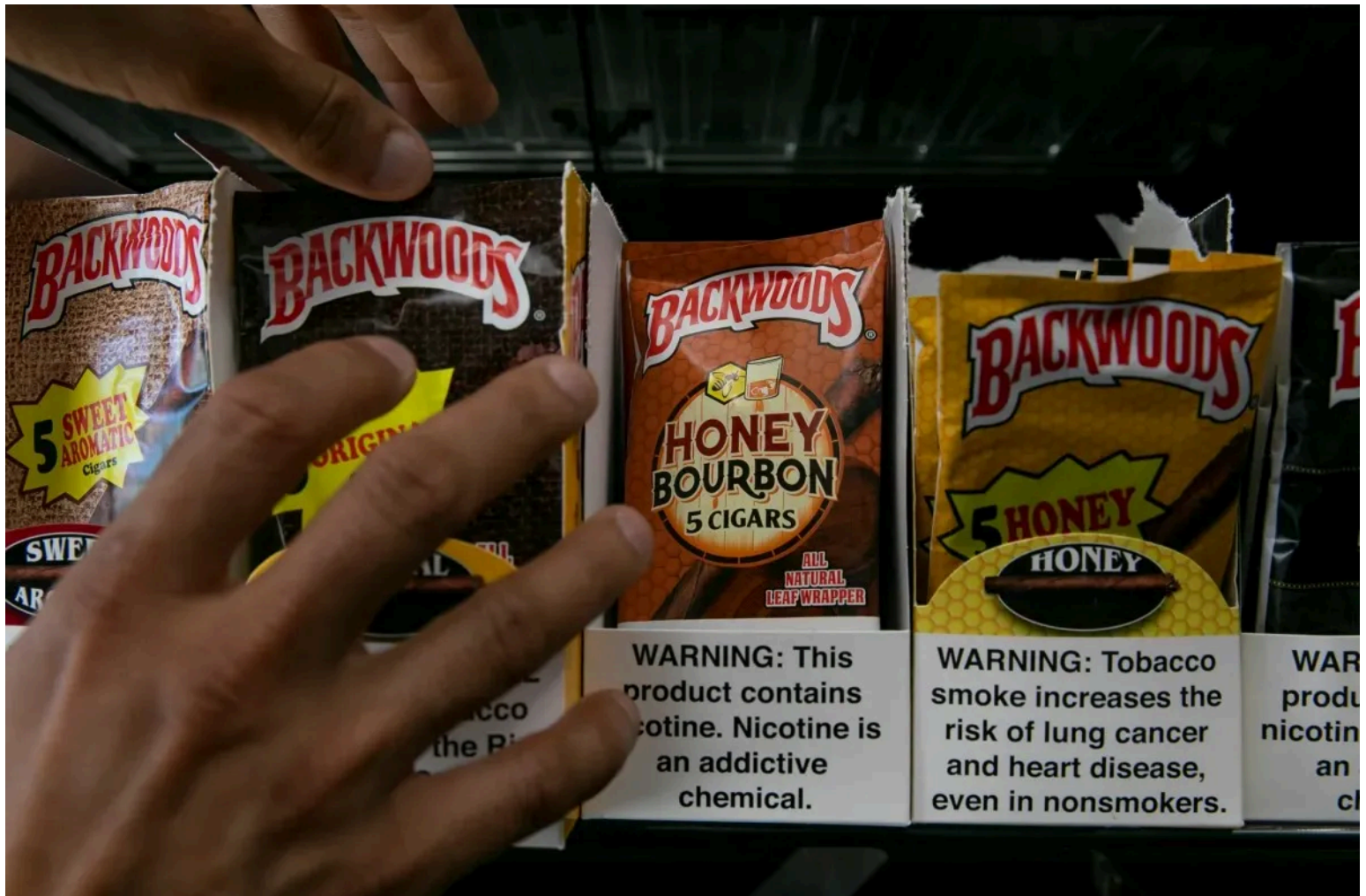


**PUBLIC SAFETY**

# Stockton police plan crackdown on smoke shops over flavored tobacco sales

by **Chris Woodyard • Stocktonia**  
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Cigars with flavored wrappers are seen at a liquor store in Berkeley in 2020. Stockton police are cracking down on retailers who sell flavored tobacco following a ban that went into effect Jan. 1. (File photo by Anne Wernikoff/For CalMatters)

Stockton police are about to start lighting up the city’s smoke shops to make sure they are abiding by the state’s ban on flavored tobacco products.

The police department **said** it is responding to “community concerns for the safety of our youth” in announcing the “zero-tolerance” inspections of tobacco retailers in Stockton. ATTACHMENT H

Flavored tobacco products were **outlawed in California in 2022** with the blessing of voters, and there have been several add-on laws since. The basic rule is that retailers can only sell tobacco products — whether for smoking, chewing or vaping — that taste like tobacco. The flavored products ban includes menthol-flavored cigarettes.

A new state law **took effect Jan. 1** and includes a list of “permissibly unflavored” tobacco allowed on shelves. That allowed for the seizure of flavored products in retail shops and authorized state Attorney General Rob Bonta to seek civil penalties for sellers not abiding by the rules.

“Young children across our state are still being lured into harmful addiction through flavored tobacco products. It’ll take a collective effort, including state and local enforcers, to address illicit access to these products,” Bonta said in a news release.

In addition, Stockton has its own laws. They include a requirement that all smoke shops or other stores selling tobacco have a tobacco retail license when renewing their business license, according to the police. Those shops found not to be compliance can be fined more than \$1,000 and have their tobacco license revoked.

The flavored tobacco laws **are borne out of a concern** that children may become hooked on the nicotine in tobacco after having been lured into trying the products because of seductive flavors, including those that taste fruity or minty.

Police said the smoke shop visits will be conducted by a city tobacco retail license inspector. The highest priority will be visits to outlets that have drawn the most complaints from residents.

“The department is taking this approach on noted violations to address selling of tobacco and flavored tobacco products to juveniles, loitering, and law violations in and around these establishments that are causing blight and harming community health and safety,” the department said in a social media post.

When Modesto officers started inspecting smoke shops in October, it discovered other violations as well. Officers found secret rooms, hidden storage areas, illegal gambling and illicit drug sales, the [Modesto Bee reported](#).