

Lowell Tobacco Control Report

January of 2026

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Lowell

Inspections

We've conducted 24 inspections this month, so far. The primary focus of this round of inspections is to educate retailers about blunt wraps and cigar packaging and pricing restrictions. Although these restrictions have been in place for years, distributors continue to push these products to local retail stores.

Tobacco Permit Renewal Process

The following establishments finally submitted their tobacco permit applications before the end of December/25:

H & B Grocery Store
165 High Street

Family Dollar
21 Nottingham St

Compliance Checks

Compliance checks have been scheduled for the last week of this month.

News

American Lung Association: New Report on the State of Tobacco Control Gives Massachusetts Mixed Grades, Including an F for Funding for State Tobacco Prevention Programs

Office of the Attorney General: AG's Office Secures Guilty Plea from Chicopee Man for Tobacco Tax Evasion Scheme

New Report: Massachusetts Must Continue Efforts to Reduce Tobacco Use Amid Federal Cuts

American Lung Association's "State of Tobacco Control" report releases Massachusetts grades for tobacco control policies, outlines steps to reduce burden of tobacco

BOSTON, AZ,MA | January 27, 2026

According to the [American Lung Association's 24th annual "State of Tobacco Control" report](https://www.lung.org/research/sotc) (<https://www.lung.org/research/sotc>), released today, Massachusetts's grades show that the state must step up efforts to reduce tobacco use to protect communities. Massachusetts's action on tobacco control and prevention is especially critical due to the dramatic rollback of federal tobacco prevention efforts in 2025.

Tobacco use remains the nation's leading cause of preventable death and disease, claiming the lives of more than 9,300 state residents each year. The report urges Massachusetts lawmakers to focus on increasing funding for tobacco prevention and quit smoking programs to curb tobacco use.

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The “State of Tobacco Control” report grades states and the District of Columbia in five areas that have been proven to prevent and reduce tobacco use and save lives. In the 2026 report, Massachusetts received the following grades:

1. Funding for State Tobacco Prevention Programs – Grade F
2. Strength of Smokefree Workplace Laws – Grade A
3. Level of State Tobacco Taxes – Grade B
4. Coverage and Access to Services to Quit Tobacco – Grade C
5. Ending the Sale of All Flavored Tobacco Products – Grade A

In 2025, the tobacco control and prevention landscape fundamentally changed when the administration took a series of actions that weakened enforcement and jeopardized public health efforts across the country. These included the virtual elimination of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Office on Smoking and Health, major staffing cuts to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Center for Tobacco Products and delaying Congressionally appropriated funding for nearly six months. As a result, tobacco control and quitline programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia were left at risk of shutting down, with some states drastically reducing lifesaving services.

“It is devastating to see the federal government largely abandon its tobacco control efforts. Walking away from the incredible progress the nation has made on reducing tobacco use over the past 50 years is unacceptable,” said Daniel Fitzgerald, Director of Advocacy at the American Lung Association in Massachusetts. “Now more than ever, states need to ramp up their tobacco prevention efforts even more to protect residents from disease and addiction caused by tobacco use.

“While Massachusetts continues to be a national leader in tobacco control efforts, the report finds that 2026 will be critical to keep that momentum going. Policymakers must increase funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs to CDC recommended level, raise the tobacco tax by at least \$1.00 per pack and tax non-cigarette

tobacco products at comparable rates and prevent rollbacks to smokefree laws and tobacco-prevention funding,” said Fitzgerald.

Despite receiving \$551,300,000 from tobacco settlement payments and tobacco taxes, Massachusetts only funds tobacco control efforts at 19.5% of the CDC’s recommended level. The Lung Association urges Governor Healey and the legislature to significantly increase funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs to ensure the state maintains its leadership and protects the health of its residents.

Federal Grades Overview

The 2026 “State of Tobacco Control” report grades the federal government in five areas:

- Federal Regulation of Tobacco Products – Grade D
- Federal Coverage of Quit Smoking Treatments – Grade D
- Level of Federal Tobacco Taxes – Grade F
- Federal Mass Media Campaigns to Prevent and Reduce Tobacco Use – Grade I*
- Federal Funding for Tobacco Prevention and Control – Grade: B

**The federal government gets an I for Incomplete in this category due to data not being able to be obtained about the duration, reach and frequency of the Real Cost campaign in 2025.*

In the “State of Tobacco Control” report, the American Lung Association calls on the federal government to fully restore critical tobacco control programs, including CDC’s Office on Smoking and Health. Federal leadership is essential. In the current absence of federal leadership, the organization is calling on state legislatures to advance strong, fact-based tobacco control policies that protect communities and reduce tobacco use.

To learn more about this year’s “State of Tobacco Control” grades and take action, visit [Lung.org/sotc](https://www.lung.org/sotc).
(<https://www.lung.org/research/sotc>)

State grades in “State of Tobacco Control” reflect actions taken by elected officials and do not reflect on the hard work of state tobacco control programs or advocates.

Get involved and help the mission of the American Lung Association. The Fight For Air Climb in Boston is coming up on March 28, 2026 at One Boston Place. Learn more at [FightForAirClimb.org/boston](https://action.lung.org/site/TR?fr_id=28369&pg=entry).
(https://action.lung.org/site/TR?fr_id=28369&pg=entry)

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About the American Lung Association

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy and research. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to champion clean air for all; to improve the quality of life for those with lung disease and their families; and to create a tobacco-free future. For more information about the American Lung Association, which has a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator and is a Platinum-Level GuideStar Member, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872) or visit: [Lung.org](http://lung.org). (<http://lung.org>) To support the work of the American Lung Association, find a local event at [Lung.org/events](https://www.lung.org/get-involved/events). (<https://www.lung.org/get-involved/events>)



OFFERED BY Office of the Attorney General

PRESS RELEASE

AG's Office Secures Guilty Plea from Chicopee Man for Tobacco Tax Evasion Scheme

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

1/13/2026

Office of the Attorney General

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SPRINGFIELD — The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office (AGO) today announced that Jaffar Syed, 52, of Chicopee, pled guilty in Hampden Superior Court to Tax Evasion (1 count) and Filing a False Tax Return (2 Counts) related to a scheme to evade excise taxes associated with the importation and sale of tobacco products. Syed was sentenced to 18 months in the House of Correction, suspended for three years, on the Tax Evasion charge, and three years probation on the False Tax Return charges.

The AGO

[indicted](#)

/news/agawam-man-charged-in-tobacco-tax-evasion-scheme?_gl=1%2A1xuw9g7%2A_ga%2AMTE5NTQ5NTYzOC4xNjkzMjM2ODc2%2A_ga_MCLPEGW7WM%2Acz1

Syed in April 2024 after a joint investigation with the Massachusetts State Police (MSP) and the Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigations Bureau revealed that Syed had purchased bulk amounts of smokeless tobacco, smoking tobacco, and cigars from a wholesale distributor in Pennsylvania and then sold those products through his company, Shaws Whole Sale LLC, to retailers primarily in and around Hampden County.

In addition to failing to pay the applicable excise taxes on the imported tobacco products, Shaws Whole Sale filed two tax returns in 2018 that falsely reported \$0 tax liability. The investigation revealed that Syed evaded more than \$100,000 in taxes from March 2018 through January 2019.

This matter was prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Benjamin Woolf of the AGO's White Collar and Public Integrity Division, with assistance from Senior Financial Investigator Eugene Griffin of the AGO's Gaming Enforcement Division, the AGO's Digital Evidence Lab, MSP, and the Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigations Bureau.

The AGO's White Collar and Public Integrity Division investigates and prosecutes serious criminal misconduct involving crimes against public agencies, corrupt public employees and public entities, crimes that have a harmful effect on public confidence in our government and other trust institutions, and financial crimes.

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Office of the Attorney General

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