

# Tobacco Control Tribune

▶ FORWARD TO A FRIEND

## Leading Tobacco Control News

### **FDA Releases Menthol Report**

On March 23, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC) submitted its final recommendations to the FDA regarding menthol cigarettes. Finding that the availability of menthol cigarettes increases the number of youth who become regular daily smokers and reduces smoking cessation, especially among African-Americans, TPSAC concluded, "Removal of menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health in the United States." The Lung Association strongly supports the committee's findings and conclusions, which are based on an exhaustive review of the scientific evidence regarding the public health impact of menthol cigarettes, and urges the FDA to implement the committee's recommendation in a way that maximizes the public health benefits. [» Read More](#)  
(Source: *FDA Releases Menthol Report*, American Lung Association Press Release, March 18, 2011.)

### **Study Finds Drop in Online Sales of Cigarettes**

A recent study published online February 14 in the journal *Public Library of Science* found that online sales of cigarettes have significantly dropped. The study credits shipping restrictions imposed by many package delivery companies, and a 2005 prohibition on using credit cards for online cigarette sales. The study tested the prohibition's effectiveness by comparing website sales one year before and two years after the agreements went into effect. It also found that many popular online cigarette retailers have experienced a substantial reduction in website traffic and sales, forcing some websites to shut down altogether. These trends are particularly important for protecting kids, as online retailers typically do not adhere to minimum purchase age restrictions.  
(Source: Study finds drop in online sales of cigarettes, HealthDay News, February 25, 2011.)

### **Tobacco-Free Baseball Campaign Launched**

With the beginning of the Major League Baseball season fast approaching, ten major medical and public health groups, including the American Lung Association, have joined together to launch a campaign urging Major League Baseball (MLB) and the Major League Baseball Players Association to prohibit tobacco use by players, managers, coaches and other staff at major league ballparks. The use of tobacco in the MLB has been long-standing subject of criticism

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from the public and politicians alike, and the campaign hopes that MLB players will be able to set a powerful example to discourage young men from taking up tobacco products, especially smokeless tobacco. » [Read More](#)

(Source: *Leading Health Groups Launch National Campaign for Tobacco-Free Baseball*, Joint Group Press Release issued by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, March 3, 2011.)

### **Heavy Smoking Declines in US**

According to a recent study released in the *Journal of American Medicine*, the number of people who smoke a pack or more a day has dropped significantly in the United States. This is based on national data collected from 1965 to 2007, with the most significant decreases in California. The data also showed that the number of people smoking less than a pack of 20 but at least 10 cigarettes a day has dropped significantly as well. California has also experienced significant decreases in lung cancer rates.

(Source: Steven Reinberg, *Heavy Smoking Declines in US*, HealthDay News, March 15, 2011.)

### **News on Smokefree Air Laws/Ordinances**

#### **Texas**

Following polls showing broad public support for statewide smokefree legislation, both the Texas House Public Health Committee and the Senate Human Services Committee passed bills that would prohibit smoking in all indoor public places, including bars and restaurants. The proposed legislation is scheduled to advance through the legislature, but no dates have been set at this time.

(Source: *Capitol Digest: Smoking ban gets initial OK*, The Statesman, March 8, 2011.)

#### **Los Angeles, California**

On March 8, Los Angeles' smokefree outdoor dining ordinance went into effect. The ordinance prohibits smoking within 10 feet of any outdoor dining area and within 40 feet of mobile food trucks, carts, or kiosks. The city has already been enforcing similar ordinances at public parks, beaches and farmers markets for several years, and the bill has been well received for the most part throughout the city.

(Source: Bob Strauss, *City's smoking ban to go into effect... and many are okay with ordinance*, Los Angeles Daily News, March 3, 2011.)

### **News on Cigarette Tax Increases**

#### **North Carolina**

On March 15, two Democratic state legislators introduced legislation that would raise North Carolina's cigarette tax by \$1.00 to \$1.45 per pack. Raising the cigarette tax would make the state's tax equal to the current state cigarette tax average. A poll conducted last month by Public Opinion Strategies shows that a majority (62 percent) of North Carolinians support an increase in the cigarette tax to help offset the state budget deficit.

(Source: Richard Craver, *Bill to be introduced to raise cigarette tax by \$1 a pack*, Winston-Salem Journal, March 13, 2011.)

#### **California**

During March, Lance Armstrong and his foundation joined cancer researchers and state politicians to promote a ballot measure to raise California's state cigarette tax by \$1.00 to \$1.87 per pack. Sixty percent of the revenue from the measure would go towards research into the causes and prevention of cancer, while 20 percent would fund efforts to reduce tobacco use. The ballot initiative, the California Cancer Research Act, will appear on the ballot in the next scheduled election, which could be as early as June 2011.

(Source: Carla Marinucci, *Lance Armstrong promotes \$1 cigarette tax*, San Francisco Chronicle, February 28, 2011.)

#### **Georgia**

Georgia lawmakers are currently considering increasing the state's cigarette tax by 31 cents to 68 cents per pack, which would raise the tax from one of the lowest in the country. The cigarette tax has

not been increased since 2003, and would generate an estimated \$100 million or more in increased revenue for the state.

(Source: Rich McKay, *Plan boosts cost of smokes*, Atlanta Journal Constitution, March 6, 2011.)

### **Illinois**

On March 16, the Illinois Senate Executive Committee approved legislation to increase the state's cigarette tax by \$1.00 to \$1.98 per pack. The increased revenue would be used currently to fund construction projects throughout the state, according to media reports. The legislation now moves to the full Senate.

(Source: *Ill. committee approves cigarette tax increase*, Associated Press, March 16, 2011.)

### **Oregon**

On March 24, Oregon's House Revenue Committee held a hearing to receive public testimony on a series of bills that would increase the state's cigarette tax. One bill would raise the tax from the current rate of \$1.18 per pack by 97 cents, another by \$1.00, and a third by \$2.42. A fourth bill would allow counties to set their own taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products.

(Source: Peter Wong, *New cigarette taxes again considered in legislature*, Statesman Journal, March 24, 2011.)

### **Vermont**

On March 25, the Vermont House of Representatives voted to approve a \$24 million tax package, which includes a 27 cent per-pack increase in the cigarette tax, bringing Vermont's cigarette tax to \$2.51 per pack. However, public health advocates, including the American Lung Association in Vermont, believe the increase in the tax is too little to help smokers quit and prevent kids from starting. The budget package now moves to the Senate for final approval.

(Source: Nancy Ramsen, *Vermont tax bill clears first hurdle*, Burlington Free Press, March 22, 2011.)

### **Nevada**

On March 25, Nevada state lawmakers introduced legislation in the Senate to increase the state cigarette tax from 80 cents to \$2.00 per pack, and double the tax on cigars and chewing tobacco. Revenue from 70 cents of the current cigarette tax goes to the state and the remaining 10 cents is distributed to local governments. The bill would take part of the amount going to local governments and send it to the state to finance tobacco prevention programs. The Senate Revenue Committee has scheduled a hearing on the bill for April 5.

(Source: Cy Ryan, *Bill takes aim at smokers to help solve budget woes*, Las Vegas Sun, March 25, 2011.)

### **New Hampshire**

While many other states are pursuing legislation to increase cigarette taxes and improve state budget shortfalls, the New Hampshire House voted on March 17 to irresponsibly cut the cigarette tax by 10 cents to \$1.68 per pack and also reduce the tax on other tobacco products. The bill will now move to the Senate, where the decrease could possibly pass, according to media reports.

(Source: *NH bucks trend, proposes cutting tobacco tax*, Boston Globe, March 17, 2011.)

For more information on tobacco taxes in your state, go to: <http://slati.lungusa.org>, click on a state and then the "Tobacco Excise Tax" link.

If you have questions or comments about the content in this e-newsletter, or have questions on tobacco control policy issues, please contact Thomas Carr, Director, National Policy, American Lung Association National Office, Washington, DC, at [tcarr@lungusa.org](mailto:tcarr@lungusa.org). To subscribe to this e-newsletter, go to <http://www.lungusa.org/get-involved/sign-up.html>.

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