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SURVEY REVEALS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX

A biennial survey of state and U.S. House candidates shows that most support progressive public health policies backed by increased funding, including additional dollars for Department of Public Health through a broader tobacco tax, Michigan Public Health Association President Robert Martin said Wednesday.

"Health care in Michigan, like elsewhere in the United States, is in disarray," Mr. Martin said. "Governor (John) Engler has made some strong commitments to public health, but he and the Legislature are going to have to find a way to fund preventive services."

About 250 candidates were surveyed, with one or more candidates in most races responding.

"There was a gratifying general consensus from Democrats and Republicans, whether incumbents or challengers, on the inadequacy of access to health care in Michigan, on making Family Planning services available to all Michigan citizens by law, and on the desirability of licensing retail tobacco vendors to further restrict sales to minors," Mr. Martin said.

A clear majority of the candidates supported a proposed increase in the state tobacco tax and using at least some of the \$200 million for public health services. Fifty eight of the state House candidates responded favorably to raising taxes on tobacco products, compared to 17 opposed, while seven of the congressional candidates said yes, compared to four opposed. The rest did not respond.

"I was most impressed with how supportive Republicans have become in the area of tobacco tax policy since our last survey in 1990," Mr. Martin said.

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