



# Tobacco Control Tribune

August 2009

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## Leading Tobacco Control Stories

### ***Report Calls for a Tobacco-Free Military***

At the end of June, the Institute of Medicine released a report entitled "Combating Tobacco Use in Military and Veteran Populations." The report, jointly requested by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veteran's Affairs, recommends that the military set a date to go tobacco-free, and then move incrementally towards that goal. The smoking rate in the armed forces is significantly higher than in the general population: 31.7 percent versus 19.8 percent. Tobacco use costs the Department of Defense \$846 million annually in medical care and lost productivity, and costs the Department of Veterans Affairs \$6 billion every year. The report also recommends expanding tobacco cessation programs and eliminating the price discounts that currently apply to tobacco products sold at military installations. The American Lung Association supports the recommendations contained in the Institute of Medicine report and urges Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to formulate and implement a plan to make the military tobacco-free. For an American Lung Association statement on the release of this report, please [click here](#). (Source: *Ban on tobacco urged in military*, Gregg Zorova, USA Today, July 9, 2009.)

### ***Department of Housing and Urban Development Recommends Smokefree Public Housing***

On July 20, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued recommendations encouraging public housing authorities nationwide to enact non-smoking policies for some or all of their units. These recommendations will help protect residents who are the most at risk from secondhand smoke exposure.

Children and seniors are especially vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke, and make up a significant proportion of public housing residents. Tobacco smoke can travel between units and leave residents at risk for respiratory illnesses, heart disease, cancer, and other adverse health effects. An estimated 50,000 people die from secondhand smoke exposure each year. To see an American Lung Association statement on the release of these recommendations, please [click here](#).

### ***FDA Warns About Safety Concerns Posed by E-cigarettes***

After months of debate over the safety of e-cigarettes, initial testing and research by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) found that these products contain several chemicals and ingredients that have hazardous effects on people's health. FDA tested a small sample of e-cigarettes and nicotine cartridges and found that the products contained known carcinogens and other materials toxic to the human body. One such ingredient was diethylene glycol, a compound found in anti-freeze. The FDA is currently reviewing the enforcement options they can take against e-cigarettes, but has seized 50 shipments of e-cigarettes over the past year. Two manufacturers of these products have sued the FDA in federal court, claiming that it does not have jurisdiction over the products.

To see an American Lung Association statement on the release of these findings, please [click here](#). (Source: *FDA considers ways to short-circuit electronic cigarettes*, Liz Szabo, USA Today, July 22, 2009.)

### **Indiana Makes Progress in Reducing Youth Smoking but Sharply Cuts Tobacco Control Program Funding**

Results of the 2008 Indiana Youth Tobacco Survey, released in July, found that the state has made tremendous strides in reducing the number of middle school and high school kids who smoke. Since 2000, the number of high school students who smoke dropped from 31.6 percent to 18.3 percent and middle school smoking dropped from 9.8 percent to 4.1 percent. Tobacco prevention and cessation programs and the 2007 increase in the cigarette tax are given credit for contributing to the declines. Despite the successes shown by well-funded tobacco control programs, states across the country are cutting funding for these programs, and Indiana is no exception. The tobacco prevention and cessation program was cut 33 percent in the two-year budget passed this year. This cut will force the tobacco control program in Indiana to make drastic cuts in all areas, including its quitline, which has recently seen a four-fold increase in calls. (Source: *Indiana youths light up less*, Shari Rudavsky, Indianapolis Star, July 15, 2009; *Smoking prevention takes hit in new budget*, Matthew Tully, Indianapolis Star, July 15, 2009.)

### **Internet may be New Forum for Tobacco Companies to Target Teens**

A study published on July 20 in the journal *Pediatrics* found that teens are being exposed to positive tobacco messages on the internet, especially on social networking sites. The total number of web pages that young people viewed containing tobacco-related content was small, but there were more pages with positive messages than negative messages. Most of the pages with tobacco-related content contained complex or unclear messages (both pro and anti-tobacco). The study concluded that the significance of these messages and their impact on the attitudes of young people towards tobacco is unclear, but that the influences on teen smoking have the potential to change as more communication occurs online. (Source: *Internet may be newest venue for teen tobacco exposure*, Serena Gordon, HealthDay, July 20, 2009.)

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

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### **South Dakota**

Secretary of State Chris Nelson recently announced that a petition to put South Dakota's smokefree air law on the ballot in November 2010 and subject it to a public vote was rejected. After the legislature passed a comprehensive smokefree air law earlier this year that was due to go into effect on July 1, opponents of the smokefree air law filed a petition with over 25,000 signatures to put the law to a public vote. After a challenge by supporters of the law, the Secretary of State's office found that the petition failed by 221 signatures. Implementation of the smokefree air law is currently on hold as opponents of the law have filed a lawsuit and been granted a stay by the court. (Source: *Petition for South Dakota smoking ban fails*, Chet Brokaw, Associated Press, July 23, 2009)

To view your state's restrictions on smoking, go to: <http://slati.lungusa.org>, click on a state and then the "Clean Indoor Air" link.

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## **News on Cigarette Tax Increases**

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### **California**

Despite polling that shows overwhelming bipartisan support for a cigarette tax increase, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger recently signed a budget that did not include any tax increases. The governor and republican lawmakers refused to cut any budget deal that raised any taxes. When asked if they supported an increase in the cigarette tax of \$1.50, 78 percent of Democrats, 75 percent of Independents, 65 percent of Republicans voiced

their support. An increase of \$1.50 would have brought in an estimated \$1.2 billion in revenue that could have been used to help close a \$26.3 billion budget deficit, in addition to preventing thousands of people from beginning to smoke and saving money on health care costs. (Source: *Debate over hefty cigarette tax increase heats up*, Steven Harmon, San Jose Mercury News, July 14, 2009)

### **District of Columbia**

After concluding that spending cuts alone would not fill a projected \$662 million budget shortfall over the next three years, the D.C. Council tentatively approved a set of tax increases on July 29, including an increase in the cigarette tax. If ultimately approved, the cigarette tax would rise 50 cents to \$2.50. By increasing the cigarette tax, council members hope to raise about \$10 million annually and discourage smoking. A pack of cigarettes would cost approximately \$7.50 after the tax increase took effect. (Source: *Higher Taxes in District Likely*, Tim Craig, Washington Post, July 30, 2009)

### **North Carolina**

Democrats in the General Assembly have reached a deal that will raise an estimated \$1 billion in revenue to close the state's budget deficit. Included in the budget package is a disappointing 10 cent increase in the cigarette tax, which will produce few health benefits. This proposed increase falls far short of the \$1.00 increase previously proposed by Gov. Beverly Perdue. Currently the fourth lowest in the nation, North Carolina's cigarette tax would rise to 45 cents if the budget is ultimately approved. (Source: *Taxes may fill holes in budget*, James Romoser, Winston-Salem Journal, July 23, 2009)

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, Manager, 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 [www.lungnews.kintera.org](http://www.lungnews.kintera.org).

For the American Lung Association nearest you, contact 1-800-LUNGUSA or visit [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org).

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