



VOTERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY SUPPORT SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN CIGARETTE TAXES

Polls conducted in states throughout the country have consistently shown broad public and voter support for cigarette-tax increases. In dozens of different states, recent polls show strong majority support for an increase in the state's cigarette tax, with results ranging from 69 percent of voters supporting a 75-cent-per-pack increase in a tobacco-growing state (Kentucky) to 73 percent supporting an increase in Florida. In most states, voters favor the proposed cigarette tax increase by a two-to-one margin.*

As shown in more detail below, these polls have found that Democrats, Republicans, independents and voters from a broad range of demographic groups all strongly support tobacco tax increases – as do significant numbers of smokers. In addition, voters also express a strong preference for political candidates who favor and vote for significant tobacco tax increases. To balance state budgets, voters prefer cigarette-tax increases to other tax increases or to budget cuts; but voters also strongly believe that at least some tobacco-tax revenues should be used for programs to prevent and reduce smoking, especially among kids.

Support for cigarette-tax increases is bipartisan. In the 49 state polls that provide the data, majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents all support increasing the state tobacco tax. In Vermont, for example, 83 percent of Democrats and 76 percent of Republicans support a 67-cent increase in the cigarette tax. Before Texas increased the state tobacco tax by \$1, a survey of Republican primary voters in Texas found that 73 percent would support a \$1 increase (to \$1.41 per pack).

Supporting tobacco tax increases wins votes for candidates of both parties from voters from both parties. In each of the 36 state polls where the question was asked, voters prefer candidates for state offices who support increases to cigarette taxes over candidates who oppose them – *regardless of the candidates' party affiliations*. Even more remarkably, in virtually all of the states at least 30 percent of voters from each of the major parties said they would cross party lines to vote for a candidate of the opposite party who supports the cigarette tax if the candidate from their own party did not. For example:

- In Tennessee, 38 percent of Republicans would support a Democrat who supports the tobacco-tax increase over a member of their own party who opposes it. Likewise, 36 percent of Democrats prefer a Republican who supports the tax to a Democrat who opposes it.
- In Kansas, 41 percent of Republicans would cross party lines to vote for a Democrat who supports a 50-cent cigarette tax increase over a Republican who opposes it.

The amount of the tax increase makes little difference to voters. As demonstrated in the attached charts, voter support for a tobacco tax increase does not diminish even with a higher amount. For example, 70 percent of Pennsylvania voters would support both a 70-cent increase and a \$1 increase in the tobacco tax. In West Virginia, a near identical majorities support a 75-cent increase (68 percent) and a \$1 increase (66 percent). Even in South Carolina, a tobacco-growing state, the percentage of voters supporting a 93-cent increase (71 percent) and a 53-cent increase (71 percent) is identical, and intensity of support is even higher for the larger amount.

To balance state budgets, voters strongly prefer increasing state tobacco taxes over either other tax increases or cuts to vital state programs. Twenty-eight (28) out of 32 state polls that asked these questions confirmed this finding,[†] including the following examples:

* This factsheet is based on all the state polls on state tobacco-tax increases conducted in recent years for which the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids was able to obtain comprehensive information regarding the questions asked and the answers received. Numerous other state polls have also been done that, according to press reports and available summaries, show equally strong voter support for tobacco tax increases (see list at end of document).

[†] In the four states where increasing the tobacco tax was not the most favored way to address the budget deficit, it ranked just 1 to 5 percentage points behind the most popular choice.

- Seven out of ten South Carolina voters (71 percent) want the state to increase the cigarette tax to help balance the state budget. No other potential revenue source received support from even half of South Carolina voters (including increasing the state sales tax and reducing funding for health care and education).
- In Iowa, 69 percent of voters favor increasing the cigarette tax to help balance the state budget. Other potential revenue sources receive far less support, such as increasing the sales tax (37 percent), reducing funding for roads (30 percent), and increasing the gasoline tax (24 percent). Hardly any voters favor cuts to education programs or health care programs to balance the budget.

Voters clearly want some of the revenue from tobacco-tax increases to be used to fund tobacco prevention efforts – and most support using tobacco-tax revenues for tobacco prevention more than for any other purpose. In every state in which the question was asked, voters expressed strong support for cigarette tax increases that directed some of the new revenue to support programs to reduce tobacco use among kids. For example:

- Eighty-five percent of Michigan voters feel it is important to dedicate a portion of new cigarette tax revenue to tobacco and disease prevention.
- Two-thirds of California voters (67 percent) support increasing the state tobacco tax and earmarking some portion to tobacco prevention programs.
- A 62 percent majority of Nebraska voters would favor adding six cents to any tobacco tax increase in order to fund the state's tobacco prevention program (just 34 percent would oppose the additional tax for tobacco prevention).

There is strong support for increasing tobacco taxes, even in states that have recently implemented an increase in the tobacco tax.

- A May 2003 poll found that Oregon voters support increasing the tobacco tax by 75 cents if the revenue goes to tobacco prevention and health care, even when they are reminded that Oregon just increased the tobacco tax by 60 cents per pack.
- A poll taken after New York state raised its cigarette tax to \$1.50 per pack found that 68 percent of New York City voters supported an additional \$1.42 per-pack increase within the city – a measure proposed and signed into law by Mayor Michael Bloomberg (R). A subsequent poll conducted for the Coalition for a Smoke-Free city found that 73 percent of New York City voters favored the tobacco tax increase (Global Strategy Group, Inc., March 2002). Among all New York State voters, support for applying the new \$1.42 increase statewide was 59 to 38 percent. (Quinnipiac University survey, February 2002).

Minority support for tobacco-tax increases is strong. In Florida, 80 percent of African American voters, 79 percent of Hispanic voters and 71 percent of white voters support a \$1 increase (to \$1.34 per pack). In New Mexico, 70 percent of Hispanic/Latino voters and 60 percent of white voters support a 60-cent increase.

Significant numbers of smokers support tobacco-tax increases. In Alaska, 46 percent of current tobacco users support a \$1 increase in the cigarette tax, 42 percent support a 50-cent increase in Iowa (to 86 cents per pack) and 48 percent of current smokers support an 85-cent tax increase in Wisconsin (to \$1.62 per pack). In the 42 polls with this data, an average of 37 percent of current tobacco users support increasing the state cigarette tax.

Large majorities of low-income persons strongly support tobacco tax increases. In South Carolina, 67 percent of voters with family incomes less than \$20,000 per year support a 93-cent increase (to \$1 per pack). In Massachusetts, 72 percent of voters with family incomes less than \$30,000 per year support a 70-cent increase. In all the other states with this data, at least 53 percent of voters in families with low incomes support substantial cigarette tax increases.

More information on state tobacco-tax increases is available at http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/fact_sheets/policies/tax/us_state_local/.

Additional Polling Data On Public Support for Tobacco Tax Increases

- A March 2007 poll found that 59% of Oregon voters supported a cigarette tax increase of 84.5 cents per pack (Riley Research poll of 478 registered voters by Mar. 5 - Mar. 15, 2007, published in *The Oregonian*, March 14, 2007).
- A *Des Moines Register* poll found 67% of Iowa adults favor raising the cigarette tax by \$1 per pack (*Des Moines Register*, January 30, 2007, survey of 800 Iowans conducted Jan. 21 - Jan. 24, 2007).
- In New Hampshire, nearly four out of five voters (78%) approve of increasing the state cigarette tax, making it the most preferred way to balance the state budget. (Becker Institute survey of 401 New Hampshire voters, published in the *New Hampshire Union Leader* May 25, 2005).
- A March 2005 survey of Massachusetts residents found 70 percent favored increasing the state's \$1.51 cigarette tax by 50-cents to help fund increased access to health insurance (State House News Service, April 20, 2005).
- A poll conducted by Elon University found that 59% of North Carolinians approve of a proposal to raise cigarette taxes from 5 cents per pack to 40 cents in 2005 and 50 cents a pack in 2006. Tim Vercellotti, the assistant professor of political science at Elon University and the director of the poll, said that support for the cigarette tax was consistent with an earlier survey which found 63% support for a tobacco tax increase. "That's real – it's not just a hypothetical any more. I guess they should take some comfort in that," Vercellotti told the *Winston Salem Journal*. "I think that speaks to the changing role of tobacco in the economy." (*Winston Salem Journal*, March 12, 2005)
- A February 2005 survey found that 65% of Texans favor a \$1 increase in the cigarette tax to fund schools. (Survey conducted by the Scripps Research Center and published in the *Dallas Morning News* February 19, 2005).
- In Washington state, 82% of voters favor a 50-cent increase in the cigarette tax (Widmeyer Research and Polling survey published in *The Olympian*, February 9, 2005).
- In a March 2004 survey conducted by the University of Connecticut, 68% of Connecticut residents supported increasing taxes on cigarettes (*Associated Press*, March 5, 2004).

State Polls Summarized In This Factsheet

Alaska – QEV Analytics (2/04); Market Strategies (4/03)

Connecticut – Mellman Group (2/02); Market Strategies/Mellman Group (5/01)

Florida – Vantage Point Strategies (1/06)

Georgia – Mellman Group (4/02)

Illinois – Market Strategies/Mellman Group (1/02)

Indiana – Massie, Inc. (4/01 and 12/01)

Iowa – QEV Analytics (1/05); Market Strategies (3/02)

Kansas – Market Strategies (12/01)

Kentucky – Mellman Group (1/04 and 12/02)

Maine – Market Strategies/Mellman Group (5/01)

Maryland – Opinion Works (4/06); Mellman Group (2/02)

Massachusetts – Mellman Group (3/02); Market Strategies/Mellman Group (5/01)

Michigan – Mitchell Research (3/04)

Minnesota – Market Strategies/Mellman Group (1/02)

Mississippi – Mellman Group (2/06)

Nebraska – Market Strategies (2/03 and 1/02)

Nevada – Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research (6/02)

New Hampshire – Market Strategies/Mellman Group (5/01)

New Jersey – Validata Research. (4/03 and 2/02)

New Mexico – Research & Polling (7/02)

North Carolina – Global Strategy Group (6/02)

Ohio – Midwest Communications (7/04)

Oklahoma – QEV Analytics/Mellman Group (1/04)

Oregon – Davis & Hibbitts (5/03)

Pennsylvania – Susquehanna Polling & Research (3/03 and 4/02)

Rhode Island – Market Strategies/Mellman Group (5/01)

South Carolina – Public Opinion Strategies (1/06)

South Dakota – Market Strategies (1/03)

Tennessee – Mellman Group (3/06)

Texas – Market Strategies (5/02)

Vermont – Mellman Group (1/06); Market Strategies/Mellman Group (3/02 and 5/01)

Virginia – Mason Dixon Research (1/04 and 8/02)

West Virginia – Mellman Group (9/02)

Wisconsin – Public Opinion Strategies (4/03); Market Strategies/Mellman Group (1/02)

Wyoming – Harstad Strategic Research (11/05); Market Strategies (10/02)