



RAISING STATE CIGARETTE TAXES ALWAYS INCREASES STATE REVENUES (AND ALWAYS REDUCES SMOKING)

Every single state that has raised its cigarette tax rate has subsequently received more tax revenue than they would have received without a rate increase, despite the fact that cigarette tax increases reduce state smoking levels and despite any related increases in cigarette smuggling or tax evasion. Put simply, the increased tax per pack brings in more new state revenue than is lost from the related reductions in the number of packs sold and taxed in the state. Moreover, the substantially higher revenue levels enjoyed by those states that significantly increase their cigarette tax rates persist over time (while the cost savings from the related smoking declines grow rapidly).¹

The table below shows all of the state cigarette tax increases in 2007 except for Hawaii (data are not yet available for that state), with each state enjoying large revenue increases in the following 12 months (compared to the prior 12 months) despite related consumption and pack-sale declines. Data from earlier state cigarette tax increases show the same kinds of positive results (as documented in previous versions of this factsheet), and subsequent state tax increases will show the same, as well, once the data is available. In sharp contrast, those states that fail to increase their cigarette taxes typically experience gradual cigarette tax revenue declines from year to year caused by ongoing reductions in state smoking levels.

State Revenue Gains from Recent Cigarette Tax Rate Increases

State	Effective Date	Tax Increase Amount (per pack)	New State Tax Rate (per pack)	State Pack Sales Decline	Nationwide Pack Sales Trend	Revenue Increase	New Revenues (millions)
Alaska	7/1/07	20¢	\$2.00	- 3.8%	- 4.7%	+ 7.7%	\$4.5
Connecticut	7/1/07	49¢	\$2.00	- 11.2%	- 4.7%	+ 19.0%	\$50.3
Delaware	7/31/07	60¢	\$1.15	- 35.1%	-4.9%	+ 35.1%	\$31.8
Indiana	7/1/07	44¢	99.5¢	- 20.2%	- 4.7%	+ 43.0%	\$155.0
Iowa	3/15/07	\$1.00	\$1.36	- 30.6%	- 4.7%	+ 140.2%	\$128.0
New Hampshire	7/1/07	28¢	\$1.08	- 13.7%	- 4.7%	+ 16.4%	\$22.7
South Dakota	1/1/07	\$1.00	\$1.53	- 25.8%	- 5.0%	+ 115.4%	\$31.8
Tennessee	7/1/07	42¢	62¢	- 35.0%	- 4.7%	+ 100.9%	\$133.5
Texas	1/1/07	\$1.00	\$1.41	- 21.0%	- 5.0%	+ 191.7%	\$1,003.7

Sources: Orzechowski & Walker, *Tax Burden on Tobacco*. U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. Consumption declines and revenue increases are for the 12 months before and after the tax increase. Nationwide consumption declines are for the 50 states and DC.

False Cigarette Company Claims about Smuggling & Tax Evasion

Every single state that has increased its cigarette taxes has received more revenue than it would have collected absent a rate increase – despite the lost sales from related smoking declines and despite any increases in cigarette smuggling or other tax-evasion. Nevertheless, the cigarette companies and their allies continue to make the clearly false argument that cigarette tax increases will not produce substantial amounts of new state revenue because of enormous surges in cigarette smuggling and smoker tax evasion.[†]

^{*} In rare cases, a small state cigarette tax increase might not bring in enough new revenue to make up for significant ongoing state pack sales declines from other factors and related reduced revenue. But that has happened only once: after NJ increased its \$2.40 per pack tax by another 17.5¢, its total cigarette tax revenues still declined somewhat over the following year. But without the rate increase the state's cigarette tax revenues would have dropped much more sharply. Every single one of the more than 100 other state cigarette tax rate increases has produced a significant net increase to annual state tax revenues despite any ongoing smoking or pack sales declines.

[†] When their false argument that states will not get additional revenues from raising cigarette tax rates is rejected, cigarette companies and their allies often fall back to arguing that states will not get "as much as expected" from their cigarette tax increases. But such "less than expected" results are just a matter of some states making overly optimistic revenue projections that fail to account for ongoing smoking declines and all the smoking reductions and other pack sales declines prompted by cigarette tax increases. For more on this additional false argument against state cigarette tax increases, see the TFK Factsheet, *Responses to Misleading and Inaccurate Cigarette Company Arguments Against State Tobacco Tax Increases*, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0227.pdf> [at point II].

In fact, research shows that smuggling and tax evasion not only fails to eliminate revenue gains from cigarette tax increases but is also a much smaller problem than the cigarette companies and their allies claim (especially when compared to the additional new revenues, public health benefits, and smoking-caused cost reductions from state cigarette tax increases). For example, a 2003 economic research study found that state smuggling and tax evasion revenue losses totaled less than eight percent of total state cigarette tax revenues (with those losses concentrated in the highest-tax states).² Similarly, a 2005 study found that all smuggling and tax evasion accounted for less than ten percent of all cigarette sales.³ In California, a survey found that soon after the state's 50-cent cigarette-tax increase went into effect, less than five percent of all continuing smokers were trying to evade the state's cigarette tax.⁴ It is also clear that states can implement a range of measures to sharply curtail any tobacco tax evasion or cigarette smuggling that may be occurring.⁵

After a cigarette tax increase, many smokers who initially try to avoid the higher rate soon use up their stockpile of cigarettes purchased right before the increase or tire of driving across state border or going to the Internet to buy cheaper cigarettes, and return to the convenience of normal full-tax purchases in their own state. Indeed, the vast majority of smokers prefer to buy cigarettes by the pack, but cross-border and Internet purchases involve multiple cartons.⁶ For example, New York state's taxable pack sales decreased sharply in the year after the state's 55-cent tax increase in March 2000, beyond what consumption declines might explain, but then increased in the following year – most likely because of smokers' depleted pre-increase stockpiles of cigarettes, smoker tax-evasion fatigue, and the strong appeal of convenient single-pack purchases from nearby sales outlets.

It is also worth noting that any real or imagined problems with smuggling and tax evasion after New York state's cigarette tax increase in 2000 were not significant enough to stop the state from increasing its cigarette tax to \$1.50 per pack in 2002, and, more recently, to \$2.75 per pack. Nor did it stop the state from permitting New York City to increase its supplementary local cigarette tax from 8 cents to \$1.50 per pack in 2002. The levels of cigarette smuggling and tax evasion in New York City are supposedly among the highest in the country; but in the first year after its 2002 rate increase revenues increased nine-fold, to \$250 million, significantly more than the city had expected.⁷

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, May 21, 2009 / Eric Lindblom & Ann Boonn

More information on the benefits from state tobacco tax increases are available at

<http://tobaccofreekids.org/reports/prices> & <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/index.php?CategoryID=18>

¹ See, e.g., Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (TFK) Factsheet, *Tobacco Tax Increases are a Reliable Source of Substantial New State Revenue*, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0303.pdf>.

² Farelly, M, et al., *State Cigarette Excise Taxes: Implications for Revenue and Tax Evasion*, RTI International, May 2003, http://www.rti.org/pubs/8742_Excise_Taxes_FR_5-03.pdf. See also, Yurekli, A & Zhang, P, "The Impact of Clean Indoor-Air Laws and Cigarette Smuggling on Demand for Cigarettes: An Empirical Model," *Health Economics* 9:159-170, 2000.

³ Stehr, M, "Cigarette Tax Avoidance and Evasion," *Journal of Health Economics*, 24(2):277-297, March 2005.

⁴ Emery, S, et al., "Was There Significant Tax Evasion After the 1999 50 Cent Per Pack Cigarette Tax Increase in California?" *Tobacco Control* 11:130-34, June 2002, <http://tc.bmjournals.com/cgi/reprint/11/2/130.pdf>.

⁵ See, e.g., TFK Factsheet, *State Options to Prevent and Reduce Cigarette Smuggling and Block Other Illegal Efforts to Evade State Tobacco Taxes*, <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0274.pdf>.

⁶ Quinn, C, "Tobacco Ad Fight Headed to Court: 3 Companies Want to Keep Philip Morris From Grabbing Retail-Counter Display Space," *Winston-Salem Journal*, June 7, 1999 [65% of cigarette sales are individual packs].

⁷ New York City Department of Finance.