



VOTERS IN ALL STATES SUPPORT SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN STATE CIGARETTE TAXES

The results of numerous ballot initiatives, as well as 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 71 percent of voters supporting a 75-cent-per-pack increase in a tobacco-growing state (South Carolina) to 79 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 61 state polls that provide the data, majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents all support increasing the state tobacco tax. In Georgia, for example, 79 percent of Democrats and 73 percent of Republicans support a \$1 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 39 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.

The amount of the tax increase makes little difference to voters. 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. Thirty-two (32) out of 39 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 seven 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-two percent of Indiana voters feel it is important to dedicate a portion of new cigarette tax revenue to tobacco prevention.
- Two-thirds of California voters (67 percent) support increasing the state tobacco tax and earmarking some portion to tobacco prevention programs. In addition, a solid majority of voters (56 percent) oppose raising the tobacco tax *without dedicating any of the revenue to tobacco prevention*.
- A majority of New Jersey voters (57 percent) prefer a 50-cent tobacco tax increase that addresses the budget deficit *and* funds a tobacco prevention program over a 40-cent increase used only for the budget deficit (29 percent support). Ten percent said that they prefer neither tax increase.
- 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, 89 percent of African American voters, 89 percent of Hispanic voters and 76 percent of white voters support a \$1 increase (to \$1.34 per pack). In Georgia, 77 percent of African Americans and 75 percent of white voters support a \$1 increase.

Significant numbers of smokers support tobacco-tax increases. In Massachusetts, 50 percent of current tobacco users support a \$1 increase in the cigarette tax, 45 percent support a \$1 increase in Mississippi and 48 percent of current smokers support an 85-cent tax increase in Wisconsin (to \$1.62 per pack). In the 53 polls with this data, an average of 38 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.

Voters have a history of approving tobacco tax increases. Despite expensive, aggressive campaigns by cigarette companies to defeat ballot initiatives to increase cigarette tax rates, voters have consistently expressed strong support for tobacco-tax increases. In recent elections, voters in five states voted to increase the tobacco tax.

- **Arizona:** Proposition 203, approved 53 to 47 percent, increases Arizona's cigarette tax by 80 cents per pack (and also increase the tax on other tobacco products) and utilizes the revenue to fund early childhood development programs. (November 2006)
- **Colorado:** By 61 to 39 percent, voters increased the state cigarette tax by 64 cents to 84 cents per pack and dedicated some of the new revenue to fund tobacco prevention programs, with the rest earmarked for other health-related programs. (November 2004)
- **Montana:** By 63 to 37 percent, voters increased the state cigarette tax by \$1 to \$1.70 per pack and dedicated some of the revenue to health care programs. The measure also increased the tax on other tobacco products. (November 2004)
- **Oklahoma:** By 53 to 47 percent, voters increased the state cigarette tax by 80 cents to \$1.03 per pack, as well as taxes on other tobacco products. The revenue will fund various health-related programs. The Oklahoma victory came despite the fact that proponents of the initiative were outspent by opponents, funded largely by Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds, who spent almost \$2 million in an attempt to defeat the initiative. (November 2004)
- **South Dakota:** By 61 to 39 percent, voters increased South Dakota's cigarette tax by \$1 per pack and the tax on other tobacco products from 10 to 35 percent of the wholesale price. This new revenue will fund tobacco prevention and cessation programs, property tax relief, education enhancement and health care. (November 2006)

In November 2002, by a margin of two to one (67 percent to 33 percent), Arizona voters increased the state cigarette tax by 60 cents and dedicated some of the revenue to restore funding for the state's highly successful tobacco prevention program. In September 2002, 64 percent of Oregon voters approved a 60-cent per pack cigarette tax increase, with some of the funds dedicated to tobacco prevention. In November 2001, 66 percent of Washington state voters approved a measure to raise the state cigarette tax by 60-cents per pack, dedicating the funds to tobacco prevention and health care. Ballot initiatives have also raised state cigarette tax rates in California (11/98 & 11/88), Oregon (11/96), Arizona (11/94), and Massachusetts (11/92), despite the fact that spending by the major cigarette companies to defeat the proposed tobacco-tax increases far exceeded the expenditures in favor of the increases.

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For more information on state tobacco-tax increases, see the Campaign's website at

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

Additional Polling Data On Public Support for Tobacco Tax Increases

- A Washington Post poll of Maryland residents found strong support for increasing the cigarette tax by \$1 per pack. Almost seven in 10 Maryland residents support increasing taxes on cigarettes, including eight in 10 nonsmokers and nearly four in 10 smokers. (*Washington Post*, October 24, 2007, survey of 1,103 MD adults conducted October 18-22, 2007).
- 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).
- In Pennsylvania, seven out of ten voters (71%) support higher cigarette taxes to help pay for health insurance for Pennsylvania residents (Quinnipiac University survey of 1,014 Pennsylvania voters, released February 7, 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)
- 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).

State Polls Summarized In This Factsheet

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

California – Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (3/03)

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

Florida – Public Opinion Strategies (3/08), Vantage Point Strategies (1/06)

Georgia – Public Opinion Strategies (1/08), Mellman Group (4/02)

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

Indiana – Public Opinion Strategies/Mellman Group (1/07), Massie, Inc. (4/01 and 12/01)

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

Kansas – Market Strategies (12/01)

Kentucky – Opinion Research Associates (8/07), Mellman Group (1/04 and 12/02)

Maine – Critical Insights (4/07), Market Strategies/Mellman Group (5/01)

Maryland – Opinion Works (8/07 and 4/06); Mellman Group (2/02)

Massachusetts – Kiley & Company (1/08), Mellman Group (3/02); Market Strategies/Mellman Group (5/01)

Michigan – Mitchell Research (3/04)

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

Mississippi – Public Opinion Strategies (6/08), Mellman Group (2/06)

Nebraska – Public Opinion Strategies (2/07), 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)

New York – Global Strategy Group (2/08)

North Carolina – Global Strategy Group (6/02)

Ohio – Midwest Communications (4/08 and 7/04)

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

Oregon – Grove Insight (3/07), 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)

Utah – Dan Jones & Associates (11/07)

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/Mellman Group (2/07), Public Opinion Strategies (4/03); Market Strategies/Mellman Group (1/02)

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