



VOTERS IN ALL STATES SUPPORT LARGE INCREASES TO STATE TOBACCO TAX RATES

Support for substantial cigarette and other tobacco product tax increases is very strong among the general public and among those persons most likely to vote in upcoming elections. For example, a January 2010 nationwide poll found that 67 percent of voters favor a \$1 increase in their state tobacco tax rates.¹ Polls in 40 different states also show strong majority support for tobacco tax increases, with results ranging from 74 percent of voters supporting a 93-cent-per-pack cigarette tax increase in a tobacco-growing state (South Carolina) to 76 percent supporting a \$1 increase in New Mexico. In most states, voters favor the proposed cigarette tax increase by more than a two-to-one margin.*

As described below, these polls have consistently found that strong majorities of Democrats, Republicans, independents and voters from a broad range of demographic and ethnic groups all support tobacco tax increases – as do significant numbers of smokers. In addition, voters also express a strong preference for political candidates who support 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.

Democrats, Republicans and Independents all strongly support large increases to tobacco tax rates. In the 74 state polls that provide the data, majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents all support increasing the state tobacco tax. In Louisiana, for example, 72% of Democrats and 72% of Republicans supported 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% would support a \$1 increase (to \$1.41 per pack).

Legislators and candidates who support tobacco tax increases gain support 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 states, at least 30% 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% of Republicans would support a Democrat who supports the tobacco-tax increase over a member of their own party who opposes it. Likewise, 36% of Democrats prefer a Republican who supports the tax to a Democrat who opposes it.
- Polling in another six states shows that, by at least a two-to-one margin, voters indicated that they would be *more* likely (rather than less likely) to support a candidate who backed an increase in the tobacco tax.

Large majorities of voters support large tobacco tax increases just as much as smaller ones. Voter support for a tobacco tax increase does not diminish even with a higher amount. For example, 68% of Nevada voters would support both a 75-cent increase and a \$1 increase in the tobacco tax. Even in South Carolina, a tobacco-growing state, the percentage of voters supporting a 93-cent increase (74%) and a 50-cent increase (75%) is near identical, and intensity of support is even higher for the larger amount.

* 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. 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 examples at end of document).

To balance state budgets, voters strongly prefer increasing state tobacco taxes over other tax increases or cuts to vital state programs. Out of nearly 50 state polls, more than 80% of the surveys confirmed this finding. In addition, a January 2010 national poll found that 60% of voters favor raising the tobacco tax as a way to address state budget deficits, while only 38% oppose raising this tax. No other option tested received majority support. Voters soundly reject increases in the state sales tax (72% oppose), income tax (76% oppose) and gasoline tax (80% oppose). Reducing funding for specific programs is also unpopular, including reducing funding for education (81% oppose), Medicaid (81% oppose), law enforcement (78% oppose), health care (74% oppose), and road maintenance and construction (70% oppose).

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:

- When asked to choose, a significant majority of South Carolina voters agree that revenue from a cigarette tax increase should be used to reduce tobacco use, especially among children, and to expand access to health care (62%), rather than to reduce other state taxes (34%).
- Eighty-two% of Kentucky voters feel it is important to dedicate a portion of new cigarette tax revenue to tobacco prevention.

Voters support taxing all tobacco products at the same rate. In many states, tobacco products such as cigars and chewing tobacco are taxed at a rate lower than cigarettes. Recent surveys show there is strong support for taxing other tobacco products at the same rate as cigarettes.

- An 81% majority of Kansas voters favor taxing products such as smokeless tobacco, spit tobacco and cigars at the same rate as cigarettes.
- More than eight in ten (81%) Massachusetts voters favor taxing products such as smokeless tobacco, chewing tobacco, roll-your-own tobacco and smaller cigars at the same rate as cigarettes.
- A recent survey found that more than eight in 10 Pennsylvania voters (84%) favor taxing other tobacco products at the same rate as cigarettes.
- About three-quarters of Ohio voters (73%) support correcting the inequity between the cigarette tax and the tax on other tobacco products and using the revenue to fund tobacco prevention programs.
- Nearly seven in ten Michigan residents (69%) support increasing the tax on cigars, smokeless tobacco and loose tobacco and using the revenue to fund tobacco prevention programs and health care services. (Public Opinion Regarding Tobacco Policies in Michigan. *Michigan BRFSS Surveillance Brief*. Vol. 2, No. 3. Lansing, MI: Michigan Department of Community Health, Chronic Disease Epidemiology Section, October 2008).
- Earlier polls in New Mexico and Kentucky found similar levels of support (83% and 82%, respectively) for taxing other tobacco products such as cigars and smokeless, or spit tobacco, at a rate comparable to cigarettes.

There is strong support for increasing tobacco taxes, even soon after an earlier increase in the tobacco tax.

- A May 2009 poll of Oregon voters found that 67% supported increasing the state cigarette tax by 60-cents per pack. When voters were reminded that the federal tobacco tax was recently increased by more than 60-cents per pack, overall support for increasing the state tax remained high at 64%.

* In the few states where increasing the tobacco tax was not the most favored way to address the budget deficit, it ranked second or third, often just 1 to 5 percentage points behind the most popular choice.

- A February 2009 poll of Minnesota voters found that support for an increase in the state tobacco tax (72%) was not diminished by a recently-enacted increase in the federal tobacco tax. Support for a state increase came even though nearly half of voters (46%) were aware of the recent federal increase. Even when voters weren't aware of the federal increase, when given information about the 62-cent per pack increase, 80% said knowledge of the federal increase either made no difference in their opinion or made them more likely to support an increase in the state tax.
- A May 2003 poll found that Oregon voters support increasing the tobacco tax by 75¢ if the revenue goes to tobacco prevention and health care, even when they are reminded that Oregon just increased the tobacco tax by 60¢ per pack.
- A poll taken after New York state raised its cigarette tax to \$1.50 per pack found that 68% 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% 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%. (Quinnipiac University survey, February 2002).

Support for tobacco-tax increases is strong among voters in all ethnic groups. In Mississippi, 70% of African Americans and 67% of white voters support a 75-cent increase. In Florida, 89% of African American voters, 89% of Hispanic voters and 76% of white voters support a \$1 increase (to \$1.34 per pack).

Even large numbers of smokers support tobacco-tax increases. In Louisiana, 47% of current tobacco users support a \$1 increase in the cigarette tax and 43% support an 89-cent increase in Virginia. In the 64 polls with this data, an average of 39% of current tobacco users support increasing the state cigarette tax.

Large majorities of low-income persons strongly support tobacco tax increases. In South Carolina, 58% of voters with family incomes less than \$20,000 per year support a 93-cent increase. In all the other states with this data, at least 53% 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%, increased Arizona's cigarette tax by 80¢ per pack (and also increased the tax on other tobacco products) and utilized the revenue to fund early childhood development programs. (November 2006)
- **Colorado:** By 61% to 39%, voters increased the state cigarette tax from 20¢ to 84¢ 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%, 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%, voters increased the state cigarette tax by 80¢ to \$1.03 per pack, as well as taxes on other tobacco products. The revenue was dedicated to 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%, voters increased the state cigarette tax by \$1 per pack and raised the tax on other tobacco products from 10% to 35% of the wholesale price, with the new revenue used to

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% to 33%), Arizona voters increased the state cigarette tax by 60¢ and dedicated some of the revenue to restore funding for the state's highly successful tobacco prevention program. In September 2002, 64% 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% 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.

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, April 29, 2010

More information on state tobacco-tax increases is available at
[http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/what we do/state local/taxes/](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/what_we_do/state_local/taxes/) and
[http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts issues/fact sheets/policies/tax/us state local/](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/fact_sheets/policies/tax/us_state_local/).

Examples of Additional Polling Data On Public Support for Tobacco Tax Increases

New York: An independent Siena Research Institute poll found that 67% of New York voters support increasing the state cigarette tax. (Survey of 805 registered New York state voters, February 14-18, 2010).

Utah: In a KSL-TV/Deseret News poll, 80% of state residents supported increasing the sales tax on tobacco products to help address the budget shortfall for 2011. (Poll of 410 Utah residents conducted by Dan Jones & Associates, February 17-18, 2010).

California: The independent and non-partisan Field Poll in California found that 75% of California voters support increasing state tobacco taxes to address the state budget deficit. (Survey of 901 registered California voters, April 16-26, 2009).

North Carolina: An independent Elon University poll found that 73% of North Carolinians support increasing the cigarette tax to address the state budget situation. (Survey of 758 North Carolina voters, February 22-26, 2009).

Maryland: A Washington Post poll found that almost 7 in 10 state residents support increasing the cigarette tax by \$1 per pack, including 8 of 10 nonsmokers and nearly 4 of 10 smokers. (Survey of 1,103 adults, October 18-22, 2007).

Oregon: A March 2007 poll found that 59% of voters supported a cigarette tax increase of 84.5¢ per pack (Riley Research poll of 478 registered voters, Mar. 5 - Mar. 15, 2007).

Pennsylvania: 71% of voters support higher cigarette taxes to help pay for health insurance for state residents (Quinnipiac University survey of 1,014 Pennsylvania voters, released February 7, 2007).

Iowa: A *Des Moines Register* poll found 67% of Iowa adults favor raising the cigarette tax by \$1 per pack (Survey of 800 Iowans, Jan. 21 - Jan. 24, 2007).

New Hampshire: 78% of voters approve of increasing the state cigarette tax, making it the most preferred way to balance the state budget. (Becker Institute survey of 401 voters, published in the *New Hampshire Union Leader* May 25, 2005).

State Polls Summarized In This Factsheet

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

California – Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates
(6/09 and 3/03)

Connecticut – Univ. of CT Center for Survey Research
and Analysis (3/09); 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) Public Opinion
Strategies(3/10)

Kentucky – *Public Opinion Strategies* (12/08), *Opinion Research Associates* (8/07), *Mellman Group* (1/04 and 12/02)

Louisiana – *Mellman Group* (4/09)

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

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

Massachusetts – *Global Strategy Group* (3/09), *Kiley & Company* (1/08), *Mellman Group* (3/02); *Market Strategies/Mellman Group* (5/01)

Michigan– *Mitchell Research* (3/04)

Minnesota – *Decision Resources* (2/09); *Market Strategies/Mellman Group* (1/02)

Mississippi – *Public Opinion Strategies* (4/09 and 6/08), *Mellman Group* (2/06)

Nebraska – *Global Strategy Group* (4/09), *Public Opinion Strategies* (2/07), *Market Strategies* (2/03 and 1/02)

Nevada – *Mellman Group* (4/09); *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* (1/09 and 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 – *Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall* (5/09); *Grove Insight* (3/07), *Davis & Hibbitts* (5/03)

Pennsylvania – *Susquehanna Polling & Research* (3/09, 3/03 and 4/02)

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

South Carolina – *Public Opinion Strategies* (12/08 and 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 – *Global Strategy Group* (1/09); *Mason Dixon Research* (1/04 and 8/02)

Washington – *Myers Research* (11/08)

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)

¹ Nationwide survey of 847 registered voters conducted January 20-24, 2010 by International Communications Research.