



VOTERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY SUPPORT LARGE INCREASES IN TOBACCO TAXES

The results of numerous polls conducted nationally and in states throughout the country have consistently shown broad voter support for tobacco tax increases. For example, a January 2010 nationwide poll found that 67% of voters favor a \$1 increase in their state tobacco tax rates.¹ An earlier national poll also found that two-thirds of voters would support a 75-cent per pack increase in the federal cigarette tax to fund the program that provides health care coverage to uninsured children.²

In addition, polls in more than 40 different states also show strong majority support for tobacco tax increases. Most recently, an April 2013 poll found that 73% of voters support a \$1.05 per-pack tobacco tax increase in Louisiana, and another April 2013 poll found 75% support for a \$1.25 per-pack cigarette tax increase in Vermont. A February 2013 poll found 67% support for a \$1 per-pack tobacco tax increase in West Virginia. In most states, voters favor the proposed tobacco 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 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 more than 80 state polls that provide the data, majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents all support increasing the state tobacco tax. In Louisiana (2013), for example, 71% of Democrats, 74% of Republicans and 78% of independents supported a \$1.05 increase in the cigarette tax. In Texas (2011), a statewide poll found solid support for a one-dollar cigarette tax increase among self-identified conservatives (64%) and also among Republican primary voters (61%).

Legislators and candidates who support tobacco tax increases gain support from voters from both parties. Polling in more than ten 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. For example:

- In Georgia (2010), fully 60% of voters say they are more likely to support a candidate who supported a one-dollar per pack tobacco tax increase, while just 19% say they would be less likely to support a candidate due to their support of a tax increase. A majority of Republicans (57%), Independents (52%) and Democrats (68%) are more likely to support a candidate who supports the tax increase. By more than a two-to-one margin, even *Republican base voters* are more likely to support a candidate who wants to increase the tobacco tax (52% more likely and 22% less likely).

* 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).

In each of the nearly 40 state polls where the question was asked, voters prefer candidates for state office who support increases to cigarette taxes over candidates who oppose them – *regardless of the candidates' party affiliations*. Even more remarkably, in virtually all polls where the question was asked, 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 (2006), 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.

Voters support large tobacco tax increases just as much as smaller ones. Polling in numerous states found that voter support for a tobacco tax increase does not diminish even with a higher amount. For example, 71% of Kansas voters would support a 55-cent increase in the tobacco tax and 69% would support a one-dollar increase (2010). In Idaho (2010), the percentage of voters supporting a \$1.50 increase (73%) and a one-dollar increase (72%) is near identical.

To balance state budgets, voters strongly prefer increasing state tobacco taxes over other tax increases or cuts to vital state programs. Out of more than 50 state polls, nearly 9 out of 10 surveys confirmed this finding.* In addition, a national poll (2010) 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:

- Fully 80% of Kansas voters (2010) say that is important that some of the revenue raised by an increase in the state tobacco tax be dedicated to preventing children from smoking and helping current smokers to quit.
- When asked to choose, a significant majority of South Carolina voters (2008) 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%).

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.

* 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.

- Polls conducted in 2013 found that voters in Vermont (83%), West Virginia (75%) and Louisiana (80%) favor taxing products such as cigars and smokeless tobacco at a rate comparable to cigarettes.
- Earlier polls in Montana (78% - 2011), Georgia (77% - 2010), Kansas (81% - 2010), Illinois (80% - 2010), Idaho (84% - 2010), Massachusetts (81% - 2009), New Mexico (83% - 2009), and Kentucky (82% - 2008) found similar levels of support 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 poll of Oregon voters (2009) 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%. An earlier (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 of Minnesota voters (2009) 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.

Large majorities of low-income persons strongly support tobacco tax increases. In Vermont (2013), 82% of voters with family incomes less than \$30,000 per year support a one dollar increase. In all the other states with this data, a majority of voters in families with low incomes support substantial cigarette tax increases.

Even large numbers of smokers support tobacco-tax increases. In the more than 70 polls with this data, an average of more than four out of ten current tobacco users support increasing the state tobacco tax.

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More information on state tobacco-tax increases is available at http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/what_we_do/state_local/taxes/ and 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).

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 (2/10 and 1/08), Mellman Group (4/02)
Idaho – Moore Information (10/10)
Illinois – Fako & Associates (4/10), 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 – Public Opinion Strategies (3/10), Market Strategies (12/01)
Kentucky – Public Opinion Strategies (12/08), Opinion Research Associates (8/07), Mellman Group (1/04 and 12/02)
Louisiana – Public Opinion Strategies (4/13), 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)
Montana – Moore Information (1/11)
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 – Public Opinion Strategies (1/12 and 2/11), Global Strategy Group (6/02)
Ohio – Midwest Communications (4/08 and 7/04)
Oklahoma – QEV Analytics/Mellman Group (1/04)
Oregon – Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall (9/10 and 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 – Baseline & Associates (1/11); Market Strategies (5/02)
Utah – Dan Jones & Associates (11/07)
Vermont – Mellman Group (1/11 and 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 (2/13, 6/10 and 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.

² Nationwide survey of 1,000 registered likely voters conducted May 29-June 3, 2007 by The Mellman Group, Inc.