

Highlights in Tobacco Control

A Newsletter for Texas Communities

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Issues Impacting Texas Communities

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Several measures before the 2003 Texas Legislative Session, including funding a statewide comprehensive tobacco cessation and prevention program, a cigarette tax, securitization and preemption, could dramatically impact community efforts to reduce tobacco use. Community members and policy makers need to be familiar with these issues and understand their impact on the tobacco control movement.

Community Health Costs Money - How Much?

The 2003 Texas Legislature will determine future funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs. Less than 1 percent of the original Texas Tobacco Settlement revenues have been dedicated to reducing tobacco use and its impact on community health. In 2000, the Texas Department of Health conducted a pilot program to identify the most effective means of reducing tobacco use in Texas using the interest on the \$200 million tobacco trust fund set up by the Texas Legislature. The evaluation showed that a comprehensive program significantly reduces youth and adult smoking rates. A \$5 million, one-time, appropriation during the 2001 legislative session helped TDH extend the benefits of the pilot program to select populations in the Houston, Beaumont and Port Arthur areas. Current funding covers only 1 out of every 5 Texans. An estimated \$60 million is needed to provide a comprehensive tobacco control program to all Texans.



Given the current budget shortfall, it is unlikely that the legislature will fund a statewide program and it is certain that interest from the tobacco trust fund will cover only a fraction of the state.

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Could A Cigarette Tax Help?

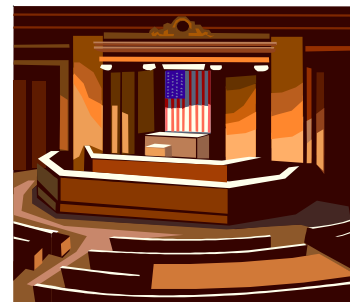
A cigarette tax is one logical source of funding for a comprehensive tobacco control program. The current cigarette tax is 41 cents per pack and has not been raised in over 10 years.

Increasing the cigarette tax has been proven to reduce youth and adult tobacco use. A \$1.00 per pack cigarette tax increase could prevent some 291,000 kids alive today from ever becoming smokers, prevent 134,000 current Texas smokers from tobacco related deaths, produce \$5 billion in long-term health care savings, and raise roughly \$1 billion a year in new revenue.

A five cent cigarette tax increase could fund a statewide comprehensive prevention and cessation program at \$60 million to help to smokers who will be most impacted by the tax and prevent youth from starting to smoke.

Will the Tobacco Settlement Revenues be "Sold Off"?

With anticipated budget shortfalls, legislators will consider "securitizing" tobacco settlement income. Securitization involves selling the rights to an expected revenue stream to investors in return for a cash advance. Instead of receiving the remaining \$14 billion dollars of



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"It was a pleasure to see how a state can actually be smoke free...in all buildings. It gives me great hope that one day it is possible that we too can enjoy such air quality in Texas"

Family and Consumer Science Teacher, Spring Branch, Texas
(upon return from San Francisco, California)



Pay Now or Pay Later?

Pay now or pay later – the cost of tobacco use is not going to disappear. As long as we underwrite the health care costs of smokers through employee health insurance, Medicare and Medicaid, Texans are going to pay a price economically and with their health. We have a choice – to fund programs that have been proven to reduce tobacco use – or face the burden of future tobacco related illnesses.

Tobacco Use Affects All Texans

Most Texans do not smoke – and they do not use tobacco products. Only 22 percent of adult Texans are smokers, yet their tobacco use places an enormous toll on the state killing over 24,000 Texans annually and costing in excess of \$10 billion dollars in direct medical costs and lost productivity.¹ In 1998, 15 percent of all Texas Medicaid costs were spent on treating smoking-related illnesses and diseases.

Nonsmokers Suffer

Secondhand smoke is a substantial health threat in Texas. For every eight smokers who die, one nonsmoker is killed by secondhand smoke.² An estimated 2,500 to 4,500 adults, children and babies die each year from others' smoking in Texas. Secondhand smoke contributes to other health problems and is especially harmful to children, causing ear infections, asthma and other respiratory problems. It also increases the risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.³ Despite documented risks, almost one million Texas youth are exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes and in public places such as restaurants. Even though most adult Texans don't smoke, nearly one third are exposed to secondhand smoke in their worksites or homes.⁴ Non-smokers question why employers continue to give smokers extra breaks. They resent being exposed to harmful and foul smelling smoke when they want to enjoy themselves in restaurants, bars and public entertainment venues.⁵



High Risk Jobs?

Non-smokers in certain occupations, such as restaurant and bar workers and nightclub musicians, are exposed to especially high levels tobacco smoke. Exposure to secondhand smoke in restaurants is three to five times higher than exposure in typical workplaces. Wait staff have up to a 90 percent increased risk of contracting lung cancer over general population. One study showed that waitresses had the highest mortality rate of any female occupational group, including four times the expected lung cancer mortality rate and two and a half times the expected heart disease mortality rate.⁶

Statistics Can Change

Unfortunately, it is today's youth who become tomorrow's statistics. Each year 60,000 Texas children become daily smokers. Nearly one-third of them will die from tobacco related disease. At this rate nearly 486,000 Texas teens alive today will needlessly lose their lives. It is time to change the statistics - to engage in long term, not short term, thinking. Funding comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs translates into savings that make sense.

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“In schools today kids hear all about AIDS, suicide and drugs – yet the one thing that they can get their hands on – cigarettes – nobody talks about. The state health department has money – but only enough to take the tobacco prevention programs to a “pilot” area - Houston. Why are those kids more important than ours right here?”

Kathy Smith
December 2002, Austin, Texas



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settlement money stretched out over time, Texas would receive less than \$6 billion dollars in the next session in a one-time, lump sum payment. States that have securitized have received about 30 to 40 cents for each dollar and forgo the bulk of the money owed to them by tobacco companies.

Securitization is a short-term fix for addressing state budget deficits. It jeopardizes the future of health programs funded by tobacco settlement money, including tobacco control programs. If the underlying reasons for the budget shortfall are not addressed, Texas could suffer the same fiscal gap in the following legislative session - with no additional tobacco settlement revenue stream.

Will Control Stay at the Local Level?

Many communities are developing and passing ordinances to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke in

worksites and public places. Texas communities, like Round Rock and Fredericksburg, value the power to make their own decisions on clean indoor air. These policies are usually stronger and more effective than state legislation because of high levels of community education and citizen involvement. An ongoing issue facing Texas legislators is the push by tobacco industry lobbyists to preempt these powers and create weaker state rules governing clean air and use of tobacco products. Preemption of local ordinances by an often weaker state law not only threatens the rights of local government but also seriously hurts community activities for tobacco control. Local advocates should be concerned about any policy at the state level that would override local decisions on clean indoor air.

For More Information

On the tobacco tax increase: Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
<http://tobaccofreekids.org>

Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs...Work!

Comprehensive Tobacco Control

Comprehensive tobacco control programs are community wide public health efforts that promote clean air and healthy, tobacco free environments. Texas programs that reach large numbers of people, like media campaigns and locally developed restrictions on smoking in public places and worksites (DUCK, Worth It? and, Yes You Can/ Si Se Puede) help to educate and protect the public. These campaigns serve as the “air cover” for grassroots outreach, targeted education through the schools, the judiciary and law enforcement officers, and cessation activities through healthcare providers and counselors.

A combination of fully operational activities at multiple levels creates an effect that is greater than the sum of its parts. Training and resources for developing comprehensive tobacco control programs are available from the Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control at

the Texas Department of Health. Call 1 - 800 - 345 - 8647

How Do We Know Comprehensive Programs Work?

When Texas began using Tobacco Settlement dollars on tobacco control in 1999, the evidence was building – but the verdict was still out. The Texas Department of Health, at the direction of the Texas Legislature, conducted the Texas Tobacco Pilot Study to determine what programs, or combination of programs, could effectively reduce tobacco use among Texans.



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Let's Hear from You

Send your questions, comments, news and stories to gsneden@mail.utexas.edu. Future issues will cover Texas media campaigns and strategies to eliminate second hand smoke.

Programs

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Findings from the pilot project and subsequent studies show what can happen when a community works together:

- A single-focus program (only enforcement, only school, or only cessation programs) funded at less than \$ 3 per person did not show measurable reductions in tobacco use among either adults or children.¹
- High level media campaigns, when combined with community programs for health care providers, law enforcement, schools and community agencies, reduce tobacco use in children and adults.¹
- Areas that fully used the programs have reduced the prevalence of any tobacco use among students in grades 6 - 12 by 30% between 1999 & 2001.²
- The greatest reductions in tobacco use were observed among Black students -- a group disproportionately targeted by the Tobacco Industry.²
- Communities with state funding for tobacco control have built coalitions of community agencies, schools, and leaders to sustain and change the way tobacco control is addressed in communities.³
- Schools funded for tobacco education programs exhibit higher tobacco prevention and cessation activity levels and higher quality programs than unfunded schools.³



National Recommendations

Shortly after Texas released its findings, in February 2001, The National Task Force on Community Preventative Services released its recommendations for reducing tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. The recommendations, based on a series of studies, were published as The Guide to

Community Preventive Services for Tobacco Control⁴ and can be found online at

(www.thecommunityguide.org). The most strongly recommended strategies, all reflected in the 2003 – 2008 Texas Strategic Plan, include:

- Smoking bans and restrictions
- Increasing the unit price for tobacco products
- Mass media campaigns combined with other community-based programs and
- Physician, nurse, dentist and pharmacist reminders

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Strategic Plan 2003 – 2008

Texans looking for ways to protect clean air and create healthier communities will find a well-developed, research-based, blue-print for tobacco control in place, the Texas Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Control Strategic Plan 2003 - 2008. Armed with three years of research, experienced staff, and coalitions developed during the Texas Tobacco Pilot Study, communities are ready for action should funds be appropriated. Individuals from more than 30 organizations, including schools, voluntary health organizations, state and local public health professionals, law enforcement and 8 Texas universities, collectively developed a plan to move from a pilot program to one benefiting all Texans. Details of the plan can be viewed online at (www.tdh.state.tx.us/otpc/mission.htm)

Alliance for a Tobacco-free Texas *Live it. Breathe it.*

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