

**From:** Legislative Action Team for Children & Families [pcawv@teamwv.org]

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 18, 2009 5:40 PM

**To:** Susan Sobkoviak

**Subject:** Legislative Alert: Save lives and support a healthier West Virginia by increasing the tobacco tax!



Legislative Alert: Save lives and support a healthier West Virginia by increasing the tobacco tax!

**Increase the WV Tobacco Tax!**

[Take Action!](#)

Reduce smoking and expand health coverage for West Virginia.

**Background:**

Legislation is set to be introduced at the WV Legislature **recommending an increase West Virginia's tobacco excise tax on cigarettes from the current level of 55 cents per pack to the national average of \$1.20 per pack.**

This measure will likely be quite contentious as the legislative session proceeds with the tobacco industry lobbying strongly, as they always do, to defeat any proposal which might dampen their ability to peddle a dangerous, toxic and addictive product. This proposed increase is a Interim recommended bill and is part of the Roadmap to Health package of bills to come out of Select Committee D this year.

Increasing West Virginia's excise tax this year is vital to the health of our state and its citizens in two ways:

1. Raising the cost of tobacco products is a proven strategy to reduce the use in virtually every age group and demographic. Studies, and experience in state after state, show that higher cigarette taxes are one of the most effective ways to reduce smoking among both youth and adults. Every 10 percent increase in the price of cigarettes will reduce youth smoking by about seven percent and overall cigarette consumption by about four percent.
2. Increasing the excise tax on tobacco products will generate the increased revenues West Virginia needs to provide health coverage to more of our people and move forward implementing a host of health reforms outlined in the Roadmap to Health Report. This report, which has been a year in the making and has involved hundreds of citizens and stakeholders throughout the state, says *"West Virginia spends 13 percent more per person on health care than the national average. Moreover, the growth in spending is slightly higher in West Virginia compared to the national average. Over 14 percent - some 254,000 - West Virginians were uninsured during 2007."*

The bill is pending introduction and **action is needed now**, so that lawmakers know West Virginians support an increase in the tobacco tax.

**Speak Up Now!**

Please click the [Take Action](#) link to send a personalized message to your Delegates and Senators and urge their support for a tobacco tax increase this session.

*For more information about this issue, please contact the [Coalition for a Tobacco-Free West Virginia](#) at <http://www.ctfww.com/>.*

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