



Legislative Update

March 17, 2011

Please read and forward to your colleagues and networks!

Bills Introduced to Raise NC's Cigarette and Tobacco Taxes by \$1.00

NC Alliance for Health and Legislative Sponsors Hold Press Conference this Week

Contact Your Legislator In Support of Increasing the Cigarette Tax by \$1.00

This week bills were introduced to raise North Carolina's cigarette and tobacco taxes by \$1.00. HB 341 was introduced by primary sponsor Rep. Jennifer Weiss (D-Wake) and SB 338 was introduced by Senator William Purcell. With the primary sponsors, the NC Alliance for Health coordinated a press conference to highlight the introduction of these bills. A video of the press conference can be found [HERE](#).

North Carolina currently faces an estimated \$2.7 billion budget deficit. According to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, a \$1.00 tobacco tax increase (including equivalent taxes on other tobacco products) would generate an estimated \$391.5 million in the first year. A recent poll shows that 66% of North Carolinians support a \$1 increase in the cigarette tax to cut the state's budget deficit and fund public health programs. Raising the cigarette tax is a viable way to address the budget deficit while also providing critical health benefits.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the BEST way to deter children from starting to smoke is to increase the price of a pack of cigarettes. Raising NC's tobacco tax by \$1.00 will reduce smoking among youth by 15.4%, preventing tobacco addiction among 81,200 of North Carolina's youth.

[SB 338](#) Tobacco Products Tax Increase (Purcell, D-Scotland)

[HB 341](#) Tobacco Products Tax Increase (Weiss, Luebke, Glazier, Womble)

Additional cosponsors include Reps. Martha Alexander (D-Mecklenburg); Alice Bordsen (D-Alamance); Becky Carney (D-Mecklenburg); Susan Fisher (D-Buncombe); Elmer Floyd (D-Cumberland); Verla Insko (D-Orange); Darren Jackson (D-Wake); Rodney Moore (D-Charlotte); Diane Parfitt (D-Cumberland);

Both bills have been referred to the Rules Committee of their respective chambers.

Governor Perdue did not include an increase in the cigarette tax in her budget proposal. Attention now turns to the House and Senate as each chamber begins work to craft a budget proposal where House and Senate leaders report that no tax increases will be considered this year. We must ensure that a \$1 cigarette tax increase is on the table for inclusion in the House and/or Senate's proposed budgets. *Contact your legislators today urging them to include a \$1.00 cigarette/tobacco tax in the state budget!* Now is the time for the members of the General Assembly to listen to the 66 percent of North Carolina voters who want to protect our children and improve our state's financial situation by raising the tax on cigarettes by \$1.

Urge Legislators to Support a \$1 Increase in NC's Tobacco Taxes

**An Increase in NC's Cigarette Tax
(and Tax on Other Tobacco Products)
Will Save Lives, Raise Revenue and is Supported by the Public.**

**A \$1.00 Increase in the Cigarette Tax
is a Win, Win, Win for NC**

How to Contact Your Legislators

To email your House and Senate members, visit the Alliance's *new website* dedicated to raising NC's cigarette tax by at least \$1. Send your message with the click of a button.

www.ncforhealth.org

To call your House and Senate members, please call 919-733-4111 and ask for the member by name to be transferred.

If you are not sure of the name of your representative or senator, check the General Assembly's website at: <http://www.ncleg.net/GIS/RandR07/Home.html>

On this page, you may look up your representative by district number, by County, or by Zip Code +4. (Use the Postal Service's [ZIP Code Look-Up Engine](#) to find your zip code +4).

Consider these statistics:

Raising NC's Tobacco Tax will Raise Revenue. According to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, a \$1 tobacco tax increase (including taxes on both cigarettes and equivalent taxes other tobacco products) would generate an estimated \$391.5 million in the first year (click [HERE](#) for additional talking points).

Raising NC's Cigarette Tax will Save Lives. Raising NC's tobacco tax by \$1.00 will reduce smoking among North Carolina adults, helping 49,500 people quit smoking and saving the lives of 39,100 North Carolinians from a premature smoking-caused death. An increase of \$1.00 will reduce smoking among youth by 15.4%, preventing tobacco addiction among 81,200 of North Carolina's youth.

Raising NC's Cigarette Tax has Strong Public Support. A February 2011 poll found that 66% of North Carolinians support a \$1 increase in the cigarette tax to cut the state's budget deficit and

fund public health programs. A significant increase in NC's cigarette tax is a WIN, WIN, WIN proposal that is popular among voters, will result in health benefits and raise revenue.

North Carolina Now has the 7th Lowest Cigarette Tax in the Nation. The national average now stands at \$1.45. Raising North Carolina's \$.45 cigarette tax by \$1 will bring NC's cigarette tax to exactly the national average. Furthermore, North Carolina's tax rates on other tobacco products (OTPs) is also well below the national average. Other tobacco products include snuff, chewing tobacco, and other products that are not FDA-approved for tobacco cessation. [Click here](#) for talking points on raising tax rates on other tobacco products by an equivalent amount.

What *MORE* can you do to promote a \$1.00 increase in NC's cigarette tax?

- 1) **VISIT www.ncforhealth.org** and tell others about it! Simply point and click to send a message to your legislators. Forward to friends, family and colleagues so they can also show their support for an increase in North Carolina's cigarette and tobacco taxes.
- 2) **[SIGN the Alliance Resolution Supporting a \\$1.00 Increase in the Cigarette Tax.](#)** Have your organization, its board members, staff and volunteers sign the Alliance's resolution to demonstrate your support for raising NC's cigarette and tobacco taxes by at least \$1.00. The website is now capable of taking signatures directly on-line, just point and click.
- 3) **VISIT the Alliance website www.ncallianceforhealth.org for talking points about raising NC's tobacco taxes:**
[General Talking Points](#)
[Health Benefits of Raising NC's Tobacco Taxes](#)
[Raising Tax Rates on Other Tobacco Products \(OTP\)](#)

Recently Filed Bills of Interest:

[SB 242/HB 218](#) - LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY *TO ESTABLISH THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY.*

Senate Sponsors: Senators William Purcell, Jean Preston, Jerry Tillman

House Sponsors: Reps. Verla Insko, Larry Brown, Linda Johnson, Jennifer Weiss

[SB 249/HB 319](#) - RESTORE CIGARETTE TAX STAMPS

TO IMPROVE THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE CIGARETTE EXCISE TAX AND TO DETER THE UNLAWFUL SALE OF NON-TAX-PAID CIGARETTES BY REINSTATING THE REQUIREMENT THAT CIGARETTES BEAR A STAMP INDICATING PAYMENT OF THE TAX.

Senator Sponsor: Senator Hartsell

House Sponsor: Rep. McGee

House Co-Sponsors: Reps. Paul Luebke, Bill Cook

****A Senate Finance Committee hearing could be scheduled on this bill in the next two weeks.**

HB 334 – REPORT ON FITNESS TESTING IN SCHOOLS

AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF FITNESS TESTING IN EACH LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT.

House Sponsors: Reps. Verla Insko, Larry Bell, Pricey Harrison and Stephen LaRoque

House Co-Sponsors: Reps. Alma Adams, Martha Alexander, Alice Bordsen, Becky Carney, Bill Faison, Rick Glazier, Jennifer Weiss

**** This bill is scheduled to be heard by the House Education Committee on Tuesday, March 22 at 10:00 am in room 643 of the Legislative Office Building (LOB).**

Statewide Premiers of Student Videos Depicting the Challenge of Leading Healthy, Active Lifestyles in North Carolina

In February of 2010, the North Carolina Division of Public Health’s Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Branch was awarded federal ARRA funding for a Communities Putting Prevention to Work project. The project, titled the Healthy Environments Initiative, is a public education campaign designed to educate residents about the link between the built environment and their health, and to encourage them to get involved in creating healthier environments in their communities.

The audience and campaign components were developed from data obtained through a random survey, a series of focus groups, and analysis of media treatment of the issue. One of the strategies being used is the engagement of youth in six North Carolina counties – they have been asked to tell their stories about their lifestyles and the obstacles they face in living active lifestyles by way of a video competition. More than 500 students have entered the contest and are submitting videos for judging. The contest will culminate in a series of red carpet premiere events that will include screening the videos, announcement of the contest winners, and a panel discussion to educate and inspire the community members and leaders in attendance.

The event schedule includes:

- Thursday, March 31, 2011 – Ahoskie/Hertford County: Carpenter’s Shop Church
- Thursday, April 7, 2011 – Greensboro/Guilford County: The Empire Room
- Thursday, April 21, 2011 – Lumberton/Robeson County: Carolina Civic Center
- Thursday, April 28, 2011—Charlotte/Mecklenburg County: The Palmer Building
- Thursday, May 5, 2011 – Chapel Hill/Orange County: The Varsity Theater
- Thursday, May 12, 2011 – New Bern/Craven County: Cullman Performance Hall

These events will be a great opportunity for local and state level leaders to engage with these communities, celebrate these students’ achievements, and hear from these communities the obstacles they face to making healthy lifestyle changes. You and your colleagues are invited to attend and share this information. Tickets are NOT needed! All of the event programs are scheduled from 7 - 8:30 p.m. however, there will be a red carpet style arrival starting at 6:30 and some photo ops immediately following.

For additional information about these events, please contact Jimmy Newkirk at jimmy.newkirk@dhhs.nc.gov.

For additional information about the North Carolina Alliance for Health, please contact Alliance Executive Director Pam Seamans at pamseamans@nc.rr.com OR Alliance Administrative Assistant Lee Storrow at t-Lee.Storrow@heart.org.

**Or, go to www.ncallianceforhealth.org
for talking points and other resources.**

Call 919-463-8329
or e-mail ncalliance@heart.org for more information

To unsubscribe, please email Lee Storrow at t-Lee.Storrow@heart.org.