

April 26, 2017



Senator Roger Chamberlain, Chair
Senator Gary Dahms
Senator Jeremy Miller
Senator David Senjem
Senator Ann Rest

Representative Greg Davids, Chair
Representative Steve Drazkowski
Representative Joe McDonald
Representative Jerry Hertaus
Representative Paul Marquart

RE: Omnibus Tax Bill (SF 2255 / HF 4)
Taxation of Tobacco Products

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 50 organizations with a common goal of preventing all Minnesota youth from a lifetime of addiction to tobacco. We appreciate your careful deliberation of all tobacco tax proposals introduced this year, and we would like to highlight three items for your consideration.

1. The House bill includes a provision that modifies the tax for moist snuff so that it applies to each 1.2-ounce container or amount, if the moist snuff is sold in a container holding more than 1.2 ounces. **We support this proposal and encourage the conference committee to include it in the final bill.**
2. The House bill expands the legal definition of “premium” cigars and reduces the maximum tax for those cigars from \$3.50 to \$.50. The Senate bill does not include this item. **We do not support this proposal and encourage the committee not to include it in the final bill.**
3. The House repeals the annual inflation adjustment on the cigarette excise tax. The Senate does not. **We do not support this repeal and encourage the committee not to include it in the final bill.**

Science shows that high tobacco prices help reduce smoking, especially among kids. High tobacco prices also encourage adult smokers to quit, reduce smoking-related death and disease and cut health care costs. Youth and adult smoking rates in Minnesota continue to decline because of our strong education efforts, high-quality cessation services and proven policies like increasing taxes on all tobacco products. Reducing tobacco prices would be a step backwards. Please support tobacco tax policies that discourage youth from starting.

cc: Governor Mark Dayton
Commissioner Cynthia Bauerly, Minnesota Department of Revenue
Senator Paul Gazelka, Senate Majority Leader
Senator Tom Bakk, Senate Minority Leader
Representative Kurt Daudt, Speaker of the House
Representative Melissa Hortman, House Minority Leader



Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of Minnesota organizations that share a common goal of saving Minnesota youth from a lifetime of addiction to tobacco. Each year in Minnesota tobacco use is responsible for more than 6,300 deaths and more than \$3 billion in preventable health care costs, and 95 percent of adult smokers started before the age of 21. The coalition supports policies that reduce youth smoking, including keeping tobacco prices high, raising the tobacco sale age to 21, limiting access to candy-, fruit- and menthol-flavored tobacco and funding future tobacco prevention programs.

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation partners include:

A Healthier Southwest

African American Leadership Forum

Allina Health

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Heart Association

American Lung Association in Minnesota

Apple Tree Dental

Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota

Becker County Energize

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

CentraCare Health

Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota

Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota

ClearWay MinnesotaSM

Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES

Essentia Health

Four Corners Partnership

Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare

HealthEast

HealthPartners

Hennepin County Medical Center

Hope Dental Clinic

Indigenous Peoples Task Force

ISAIAH

LAAMPP Institute

Lake Region Healthcare

Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative

Local Public Health Association of Minnesota

March of Dimes

Mayo Clinic

Medica

Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians

MN Association of Community Health Centers

Minnesota Cancer Alliance

MN Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Minnesota Council of Health Plans

Minnesota Hospital Association

Minnesota Medical Association

Minnesota Oral Health Coalition

Minnesota Public Health Association

Model Cities of St. Paul, Inc.

NAMI Minnesota

North Memorial Health Care

NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center

PartnerSHIP 4 Health

Perham Health

Rainbow Health Initiative

SEIU Healthcare Minnesota

St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce

Tobacco Free Alliance

Twin Cities Medical Society

UCare

WellShare International