

# CAMPAIGN For TOBACCO-FREE Kids®

## VOTERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY SUPPORT SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN STATE CIGARETTE TAXES

Polls conducted in numerous, diverse states throughout the country have consistently shown broad public and voter support for cigarette-tax increases. In 17 different states, recent polls show strong majority support for an increase in the state's cigarette tax, with results ranging from 57 percent of voters supporting a 75-cent-per-pack increase in a tobacco-growing state (Kentucky) to 82 percent supporting a 50-cent increase (to \$1.30 per pack) in New Jersey. In most states, voters favor the proposed cigarette tax increase by a two-to-one margin.\*

As shown in more detail below, these polls have found that Democrats, Republicans, men, women, minorities, and both high and low-income groups all strongly support tobacco tax increases -- as do significant numbers of smokers. In addition, voters also express a strong preference for political candidates who favor and vote for 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 to prevent and reduce smoking, especially among kids.

**Support for cigarette-tax increases is bipartisan.** In the 16 state polls that provide the data, majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents all support increasing the state tobacco tax. In Kansas, for example, 71 percent of Democrats, 73 percent of Republicans and 76 percent of independents support a 75-cent increase in the cigarette tax (to 99 cents per pack).

**Supporting tobacco tax increases wins votes for candidates of both parties from voters from both parties.** In each of the 16 state polls where the question was asked, voters prefer candidates for state offices who support increases to cigarette taxes over candidates who oppose them – *regardless of the candidates' party affiliations*. Even more remarkably, in each of the states at least 30 percent 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 Nebraska, 52 percent of Republicans would support a Democrat who supports the tobacco-tax increase over a member of their own party who opposes it. Likewise, 48 percent of Democrats prefer a Republican who supports the tax to a Democrat who opposes it.
- In Vermont, 48 percent of conservative Republicans would cross party lines to vote for a Democrat who supports a 67-cent cigarette tax increase over a Republican who opposes it.

**To balance state budgets, voters strongly prefer increasing state tobacco taxes over either other tax increases or cuts to vital state programs.** Every poll that asked these questions confirmed this finding, including the following examples.

- In Indiana, 71 percent of voters favor increasing the cigarette tax to help balance the state budget. Other potential revenue sources receive far less support, such as tapping into the state's rainy day fund (55%), raising the state sales tax (42%), increasing the state income tax (23%), and increasing the gasoline tax (10%). Hardly any voters favor cuts to education programs (9%), Medicaid (14%), or health programs for seniors (9%) to balance the budget.

- Seven out of ten Kansas voters (71%) want the Governor and state legislature to increase the cigarette tax to help balance the state budget. No other potential revenue source received support from even half of Kansas voters (including increasing the state sales tax and introducing slot machines to racetracks).

**Voters clearly want some of the revenue from tobacco-tax increases to be used to fund tobacco prevention efforts -- and support using tobacco-tax revenues for tobacco prevention more than for any other purpose.** In nearly every state in which the question was asked, voters expressed the strongest support for cigarette tax increases that directed some of the new revenue to support programs to reduce tobacco use among kids. For example:

- Eighty-three percent of Minnesota voters favored dedicating cigarette tax revenues to programs to reduce tobacco use, ahead of funding for public schools (77%), providing health care to the uninsured (77%) and funding to prevent bioterrorism (61%).
- Nearly 9 out of 10 Wisconsin voters (86%) favor dedicating new cigarette tax revenue to youth smoking prevention. Other options for using the revenue received less support, including long-term care for seniors (84%), smaller class sizes for Kindergarten through third grade (74%), and helping balance the state budget (60%).
- 68 percent of Connecticut voters prefer a 72-cent tobacco tax increase that addresses the budget deficit and fully funds a tobacco prevention program over a 61-cent increase used only for the budget deficit (19%). [12 percent said that they prefer neither tax increase.]

**Large majorities of low-income persons strongly support tobacco tax increases.** In Indiana, 77 percent of voters with family incomes less than \$25,000 per year support a 50-cent increase (to 65.5 cents per pack). In Kansas, 76 percent of voters with family incomes less than \$30,000 per year support a 75-cent increase (to 99 cents per pack). In Vermont, 71 percent of voters with family incomes of less than \$30,000 per year support a \$1.06 cigarette tax increase (to \$1.50 per pack). In all the other states with this data, at least 57 percent of voters in families with low incomes support substantial cigarette tax increases.

**Both men and women support tobacco-tax increases.** In New Hampshire, 72 percent of men and 74 percent of women support a 50-cent increase in the state tax (to \$1.02 per pack). In all the other states, substantial majorities of men and women supported the tax increase.

**Support for tobacco-tax increases comes from all age groups.** In Minnesota, more than 60 percent of voters in every age bracket support a \$1.00 increase (to \$1.48 per pack), including 62 percent of those under age 30 and 67 percent over age 65. In the other states, at least 60 percent every age group support the cigarette tax increases.

**Minority Support for tobacco-tax increases is strong.** In Massachusetts, 64 percent of minority voters and 70 percent of white voters support a 50-cent increase (to \$1.26 per pack). In Maryland, 86 percent of African-American voters and 75 percent of white voters support a 70-cent increase (to \$1.36 per pack).

**Significant numbers of smokers support tobacco-tax increases.** In New Jersey, a majority of current tobacco users (54 percent) support a 50-cent increase in the tobacco tax (to \$1.30 per pack). In Maryland, 45 percent of current tobacco users support a 70-cent increase in the cigarette tax (to \$1.36 per pack), with 42 percent supporting a tax increase in Iowa (to 86 cents per pack) and 36 percent of current tobacco users supporting a tax increase in Vermont (to \$1.11 per pack). In the 12 other polls with this data, from 22 to 39 percent of current tobacco users support increasing the state cigarette tax.

**For more information on state tobacco-tax increases, see the Campaign's website at [www.tobaccofreekids.org/reports/prices](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/reports/prices) and [www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/index18.shtml](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/index18.shtml)**

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\*This factsheet is based on all the state polls on state tobacco-tax increases done in the past year for which the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids was able to obtain comprehensive information regarding the questions asked and the answers received. Numerous other state polls have also been done that, according to press reports and available summaries, show equally strong voter support for tobacco tax increases. For example:

- Two separate polls of Connecticut voters in February 2002 found that more than 70 percent of voters support raising the state cigarette tax by 61-cents, to \$1.11 per pack (polls done by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut and by Quinnipiac University).
- An Oklahoma poll by the *Tulsa World* newspaper in January 2002 found that 63 percent of Oklahoma adults support a \$1.00 cigarette tax increase (to \$1.23 per pack) to fund health care for the state's indigent population.
- In the tobacco state of South Carolina, 68 percent of adults support increasing the cigarette tax by 44-cents (to 51 cents per pack) to fund health care (AARP survey conducted by the Southeastern Institute of Research in February 2002).
- A survey in North Carolina found that 70 percent of adults would support an additional state cigarette tax if the money was dedicated to youth tobacco prevention (40% supported an increase up to \$1 and another 30% support an increase of more than \$1 – North Carolina Public Health Awareness Survey, December 2001).
- In Texas, 76 percent support a tobacco-tax increase to help balance the budget (March 2001 poll, Center for Health Promotion & Prevention Research, Univ. of Texas Health Science Center).
- A poll taken after New York state raised its cigarette tax to \$1.50 per pack found that New York City voters support an additional \$1.42 per-pack increase within the city -- as Mayor Michael Bloomberg (R) has proposed -- 68% to 27%. Among all NY state voters, support for applying the new \$1.42 increase statewide was 59% to 38%. [Quinnipiac University, February 19-25, 2002.] A subsequent poll conducted for the Coalition for a Smoke-Free city found that 73 percent of New York City voters favored the Mayor's proposed tobacco tax increase (Global Strategy Group, Inc., March 2002).

Strong support for tobacco-tax increases is also shown by the November 2001 ballot initiative in Washington State, where more than 65 percent of those who cast ballots voted to raise the state cigarette tax by 60-cents per pack (to a total tax of \$1.42.5 per pack). Ballot initiatives have also raised state cigarette tax rates in California (11/98 & 11/88), Oregon (11/96), Arizona (11/94), and Massachusetts (11/92), despite the fact that spending by the major cigarette companies to defeat the proposed tobacco-tax increases far exceeded the expenditures in favor of the increases.

#### **State Polls Summarized In This Factsheet**

Connecticut – *Market Strategies, Inc. and The Mellman Group, Inc. (May 2001); Mellman Group, Inc. (February 2002)*  
Illinois – *Market Strategies, Inc. and The Mellman Group, Inc. (January 2002)*  
Indiana – *Massie, Inc. (April and December 2001)*  
Iowa – *Market Strategies, Inc. (March 2002)*  
Kansas – *Market Strategies, Inc. (December 2001)*  
Kentucky – *QEV Analytics (December 2001)*  
Maine – *Market Strategies, Inc. and The Mellman Group, Inc. (May 2001)*  
Maryland – *The Mellman Group, Inc. (February 2002)*  
Massachusetts – *Market Strategies, Inc. and The Mellman Group, Inc. (May 2001 and March 2002)*  
Minnesota – *Market Strategies, Inc. and The Mellman Group, Inc. (January 2002)*  
Nebraska – *Market Strategies, Inc. (January 2002)*  
New Hampshire – *Market Strategies, Inc. and The Mellman Group, Inc. (May 2001)*  
New Jersey – *Validata Research. (March 2002)*  
Oregon – *Davis, Hibbitts and McCaig (January 2002)*  
Rhode Island – *Market Strategies, Inc. and The Mellman Group, Inc. (May 2001)*  
Vermont – *Market Strategies, Inc. and The Mellman Group, Inc. (May 2001 and March 2002)*  
Wisconsin – *Market Strategies, Inc. and The Mellman Group, Inc. (January 2002)*

The Mellman Group is a prominent Democratic polling firm, and Market Strategies is a well known Republican firm. For more information about the polls they have conducted, contact Mark Mellman of the Mellman Group at 202-625-0370 or Dimitri Pantazopoulos of Market Strategies at 613-722-3322.