

COALITION for a

CALIFORNIA

Campaign Opened to Put Cigarette Tax Increase on Ballot

From Times Wire Services

SACRAMENTO—A campaign to place a 25-cents-per-pack state cigarette tax increase on the November, 1988, ballot was launched here Wednesday by the Coalition for a Healthy California, which includes health and school groups.

Organizers said the measure

could raise \$600 million to \$800 million a year for educational programs to discourage smoking and to finance research and treatment of tobacco-related diseases.

Assemblyman Lloyd G. Connelly (D-Sacramento) called the initiative "probably the most significant

attack on the health effects tobacco that's ever been launched in the United States."

The proposal would also put equivalent levy on cigars and other tobacco products not currently taxed by California. The current state tax on cigarettes is 10 cents per pack.

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Cigarette tax hike on ballot?

Coalition wants boost to pay for health costs, education

By Amy Chance
Bee Capital Bureau

A coalition of health groups announced plans Wednesday to take on the tobacco industry with a ballot initiative that would charge smokers 25 cents more a pack of cigarettes to pay for anti-smoking education and medical care for people with smoking-related diseases.

The measure, which proponents hope to qualify for the November 1988 ballot, would raise more than \$600 million a year.

At least 20 percent of the proceeds would be devoted to smoking-prevention programs, with much of the effort aimed at children.

Carolyn Martin, vice president of the American Lung Association of California, said 60 percent of smokers start by the age of 14.

"The single most important thing we can do to reduce smoking is to discourage kids from smoking," she said.

Martin said California's current cigarette tax of 10 cents a pack is the fifth lowest in the nation and has not been increased for 20 years. The initiative for the first time would also tax cigars and other tobacco products.

Officials of the North Carolina-based Tobacco Institute, which is expected to lead opposition to the measure if it gets on the ballot, could not be reached late Wednesday.

Assemblyman Lloyd Connelly, D-Sacramento, who failed to win passage of a similar measure in the Legisla-

ture this year, said proponents, who are calling themselves the Coalition for a Healthy California, believe they can raise enough money to get their message across.

The group expects to start circulating petitions in November to obtain the signatures needed to put the measure on the ballot.

"We're going to run a tough campaign. We've got truth on our side," Connelly said. "On the other side will be massive amounts of money."

California voters decisively defeated an anti-smoking initiative in 1978, a loss that supporters blamed on massive spending by the opposition.

But Connelly said that measure, which would have banned smoking in both public and private buildings, was substantially different.

This time, he said, the public will understand the fairness of asking smokers to help offset the costs of their habit, estimated at \$2.17 for every pack of cigarettes sold. Polling indicates voters would support a tobacco tax increase, he said.

Money raised through the increase would be used to support medical research in cancer, heart and lung diseases and to treat hospital patients with smoking-related diseases who are unable to pay for their care.

"The God's truth is the quarter they spend may very well be funding the research and treatment that may very well save their lives," Connelly said.

Drive Starts To Raise State's Cigaret Taxes

Associated Press

Sacramento

Calling tobacco "the single most preventable cause of death and disease in America," a coalition that includes health and school groups opened an initiative cam-

paign yesterday to raise state tobacco taxes to finance education, treatment and research programs.

"This is probably the most significant attack on the health effects of tobacco that's ever been launched in the United States," Assemblyman Lloyd Connelly, D-Sacramento, said at a Capitol press conference.

He said smoking will kill 30,000 Californians this year.

The Coalition for a Healthy California said it will try to put an

initiative on the November 1988 ballot to raise cigaret taxes 25 cents a pack and put an equivalent levy on other tobacco products.

The measure would raise \$600 million to \$800 million a year to pay for education programs to discourage smoking, research on and treatment of tobacco-related diseases, and fire prevention and restoration programs, Connelly said.

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