

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**ROPER STARCH SURVEY SHOWS MAJORITY OF
AMERICANS OPPOSED TO TOBACCO TAX INCREASE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A recent public opinion survey conducted by Roper Starch Worldwide shows that a majority of Americans do not support increasing taxes on cigarettes, even if the revenues would be used for Medicare coverage of prescription drugs. In the national survey conducted last month 53 percent of those polled said they are opposed to increasing tobacco taxes.

Moreover, the survey, which was commissioned by Philip Morris, found that 44 percent of Americans said tobacco taxes are currently “too high” and an additional 22 percent said that taxes on cigarettes are “about right”.

When respondents were told that local, state and federal governments make four times more through the sale of a pack of cigarettes than the tobacco companies, even more Americans said that cigarette taxes are too high. In this case, a majority (51 percent) said tobacco taxes are “too high.” More than seven in ten (74 percent) said they are “too high” or “about right.” Only 21 percent said cigarette taxes are “too low.”

“These results are very consistent with the findings of our Roper Reports tracking surveys over the last two decades. Generally speaking, Americans think tobacco taxes are either too high or about right, with few in favor of increasing them,” said Edward Keller, President of Roper Starch.

The survey of 1,013 adults also found that only four in ten Americans believe that the purpose of raising cigarette taxes is to reduce smoking. An equal number believe that such taxes are simply intended to raise revenue for the government as say they are intended to reduce youth smoking. Four in ten (40 percent) said the main intention for raising tobacco taxes is to gain more money for the government, with a total of 39 percent seeing them as a way to reduce smoking either by keeping kids from starting (21 percent) or by getting current smokers to quit (18 percent). An additional 17 percent said increasing cigarette taxes is aimed at earning political points.

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A majority of Americans also believe that raising taxes on cigarettes will have little effect on reducing the level of youth smoking. When asked how effective increasing the tax on cigarettes will be in significantly reducing youth smoking, six in ten said "not at all effective" (40 percent) or "not very effective" (21 percent)

Just 11 percent said raising tobacco taxes would be "very effective" while 25 percent said cigarette taxes increases would be "somewhat effective" in reducing youth smoking.

"These results show that most Americans are skeptical of the idea that raising tobacco taxes will significantly impact youth smoking levels," Keller said.

The results cited above were gathered in telephone surveys with 1,013 adults between December 8th and 12th, 1999. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3% points. The complete survey questions and findings are attached.

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