



Coalition on Smoking OR Health

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Contact: Phil Wilbur, ACS
202/546-4011
Diane Maple, ALA
202/785-3355
Joe Marx, AHA
202/822-9380

KENTUCKY STATE LEGISLATOR CALLS FOR HIGHER TOBACCO TAXES; SAYS THE TAX INCREASE COULD HELP, NOT HURT, U.S. TOBACCO FARMERS

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Higher tobacco taxes will not be detrimental to the economies of tobacco growing states and could even be beneficial to tobacco farmers, according to a state legislator from Kentucky.

Rep. Anne Northup, speaking at a news conference hosted by the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Lung Association, united as the Coalition on Smoking OR Health, said "It is true that the future of Kentucky's farmers is precarious, but what is threatening them is not a tobacco tax, but the tobacco companies themselves."

Northup, in Washington to urge tobacco state members of Congress to support a tobacco tax increase as a way to finance health care reform, said, "A portion of the proceeds from a tobacco tax could be used to help tobacco farmers to get out of the tobacco business. These farmers could then produce commodities that would provide for a strong economic future for their families and a healthier future for all Americans."

Northup's claims were backed by a new report released by the Coalition that challenges assertions made by the tobacco industry that a major increase in tobacco taxes would cause job losses and other economic problems. The report, written by Arthur Andersen Economic Consulting, concludes that money not spent on tobacco products will not simply disappear from the economy but will be redirected into other goods and services, creating employment and business opportunities in other industries.

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"Tobacco companies are no friend of U.S. tobacco farmers. In fact, for years U.S. tobacco companies have been increasing their imports of foreign tobacco at the expense of America's tobacco farmers," said Alan C. Davis, Chairman of the Coalition and vice president for public affairs for the American Cancer Society.

The Coalition on Smoking OR Health has endorsed an increase in the tobacco tax of \$2 per pack estimating that such an increase would help stop children from starting to smoke and would prevent almost 2 million premature deaths in the U.S. over time.

The Coalition on Smoking OR Health was formed in 1982 by the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Lung Association to more effectively inform federal legislators and other public officials about the health consequences of tobacco use. The three health organizations represent more than six million volunteers throughout the United States.

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