



This campaign is about creating the conditions that make it easier for Kentuckians to quit smoking or using tobacco.



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## Kentucky Voters Send Legislators Clear Message: Raise Tobacco Taxes

January 4, 2018 | Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow

**(FRANKFORT, Ky - January 4, 2018)** [A new poll](#) shows a significant majority of Kentucky voters of all party affiliations support raising the state's cigarette tax by \$1 a pack as a smart solution to save lives and health care dollars, while partially addressing the state's budget shortfall and other revenue needs. The poll, conducted in mid-December by Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, Inc., found that 69 percent of registered voters support a \$1 cigarette tax increase. Overall support increased to 73 percent when respondents heard about the specific revenue and health benefits of the tax increase.

"As Kentucky legislators begin the legislative session with a budget deficit of more than \$150 million, and grapple with tax reform and the public pension crisis, this poll shows that voters have a clear message for them: address the budget, raise tobacco taxes - and raise them by a \$1 a pack," said Ben Chandler, chair of the Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow, which supports the tax increase as the most effective policy change for reducing smoking rates and smoking-related illness in Kentucky.

When asked about several ways the legislature could raise revenue to address the state's budget crisis - including increasing the current 6 percent sales tax to 7 percent, applying the state sales tax to groceries or services not currently subject to tax (i.e. dry cleaning and car repairs) - the results were clear. Voters overwhelmingly favored just one option: increasing the state's tobacco tax.

Experts estimate that a \$1 increase in the state's tobacco tax would save nearly 15,000 Kentuckians from premature deaths from smoking and keep about 20,000 kids from becoming adult smokers. It would also save the state about \$1 billion in long-term health care costs from those adult and youth smoking declines.

Other key findings from the poll include:

- Across all party lines and all regions of the state, the poll found that a significant majority of voters support a \$1 cigarette tax increase. Republicans support the tax at a slightly higher level - 71 percent, compared with 67 percent support among Democrats and 66 percent among Independents.
- Of all tax increases presented to the voters polled, support for the tobacco tax increase was by far the most favored option as part of tax reform. A strong majority (52 percent) chose the cigarette tax as the option they would most support, compared to 19 percent support for a sales tax increase, 9 percent support for subjecting currently untaxed services to the state sales tax, and 4 percent support for applying the sales tax to groceries. Sixteen percent were not sure.
- When learning that a cigarette tax of \$1 is projected to raise about \$250 million a year for Kentucky and prevent about 20,000 kids from becoming smokers, support for the \$1 cigarette tax increased to 73 percent.
- If the state does increase the cigarette tax, 80 percent of voters say the tax on non-cigarette tobacco products should be increased, as well.

"Our state faces significant health and fiscal challenges, but with these challenges, comes opportunity," said Tonya Chang, Senior Government Relations Director in Kentucky for the

*American Cancer Society  
Cancer Action Network*

*American Heart Association  
American Stroke Association*

*American Lung Association*

*Baptist Health*

*Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky*

*Kentucky Center for Smoke-free  
Policy*

*Kentucky Chamber of Commerce*

*Kentucky Council of Churches*

*Kentucky Equal Justice Center*

*Kentucky Health Collaborative*

*Kentucky Health Departments  
Association*

*Kentucky Hospital Association*

*Kentucky Medical Association*

*Kentucky Nurses Association*

*Kentucky School Boards  
Association*

*Kentucky Voices for Health*

*Kentucky Youth Advocates*

### Contact the Coalition

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American Heart Association. "Smoking costs every Kentucky family about \$1,100 in taxes a year, whether someone in that family smokes or not. If we lower the number of smokers in the state, we'll lower costs both now and in the future. More importantly, we'll save lives. Raising the tobacco tax by \$1 is the sensible, fiscally responsible, effective, and morally right thing to do."

The poll of 625 registered Kentucky voters was conducted by nationally renowned Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. of Jacksonville, Florida from December 13 through December 18, 2017. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence. The margin of error is higher for subgroups. The American Heart Association paid for the poll with a grant from the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

#### About the Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow

The Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow is committed to its mission of improving Kentucky's health by protecting Kentuckians from secondhand smoke and other tobacco emissions, and by reducing the high rate of smoking and tobacco use in the Commonwealth. For more information, please visit [www.smokefreetomorrow.org](http://www.smokefreetomorrow.org).

The Coalition is led by representatives of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Baptist Health, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Kentucky Council of Churches, Kentucky Health Collaborative, Kentucky Health Departments Association, Kentucky Hospital Association, Kentucky Medical Association, Kentucky Nurses Association, Kentucky School Boards Association, Kentucky Voices for Health and Kentucky Youth Advocates. Other partners and members of the Coalition represent a broad array of more than 140 groups, including Kentucky business leaders, health advocates, health care providers and payers, educators, and faith community leaders. See entire list on the Coalition [website](#).

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