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71% OF OREGON VOTERS FAVOR A \$1 CIGARETTE TAX INCREASE TO FUND TOBACCO PREVENTION PROGRAMS IN THE STATE

Tobacco tax would bring in \$77 million in new revenue, reduce youth smoking

Salem, OR (December 1, 2010) – As legislators face a growing budget deficit, a new poll released today shows that 71 percent of Oregon voters support raising the cigarette tax by \$1 per pack with the funds directed towards health services and programs that prevent kids from smoking and help smokers who want to quit.

Support for the cigarette tax increase comes from a broad-based coalition of voters, including 59 percent of Republicans, 78 percent of Democrats, and 74 percent of Independents. Even more, 57 percent of voters who indicated in the poll that they are generally opposed to any new tax increases in the state to fund state services are actually *supportive* of the \$1 cigarette tax increase.

“Now is the time for legislators to listen to the 71 percent of Oregon voters who want to raise the cigarette tax instead of cutting important health, cessation, and prevention programs. These results show that, regardless of political party, age, or where they live in the state, voters across Oregon understand that raising the cigarette tax is a smart way to protect our kids from tobacco and make the state a healthier place to live,” said Brett Hamilton, executive director of the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Oregon, Inc (TOFCO).

The survey of 500 registered Oregon voters was conducted by Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc. (DHM Research), an independent and non-partisan firm located in the state, and released by the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Oregon, a coalition of groups including the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Northwest Health Foundation, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, the Oregon Medical Association, the Oregon Nurses Association, and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Out of ten proposals tested to reduce the budget deficit, an increase on the state tax on cigarettes tested the highest, with 71 percent of the electorate in favor of it. They also strongly prefer it to other options to reduce the state budget deficit, such as reducing funding to health care services for low-income families and other vulnerable populations, or cuts to roads and highways or K-12 and university education (service reductions that majorities of all voters are opposed to).

The survey also found that:

- 83 percent of voters said the cigarette tax increase would have either a neutral or positive impact on their support for legislators that favor the \$1.00 proposal
- 70 percent support using part of the revenue brought in from the tax to fund programs to keep children and teens from smoking, and 74 percent support the revenue being used to fund health care services for low-income families in Oregon
- 78 percent think tobacco is a health care problem affecting everyone and this tax will reduce the number of health care costs related to tobacco use

- 70 percent agree that this tax is not unfair to low-income Oregonians if the funds are directed to services they may use one day, such as health care and services that help them quit using tobacco products

Data from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids shows a \$1 increase in Oregon's tobacco tax would raise \$77 million in new annual revenue. Such an increase would also prevent more than 28,000 Oregon kids from smoking, save more than 13,000 state residents from premature, smoking-caused deaths, and save more than \$650 million in tobacco-related health care costs.

This statewide survey of Oregon voters was conducted between September 9 and 13, 2010. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percent at the 95% confidence level.

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