

# TOFCO

TOBACCO-FREE COALITION OF OREGON, INC

**To:** House Committee on Revenue  
**From:** Brett Hamilton, Executive Director  
**Date:** March 15, 2013  
**Re:** Support HB 2870- Removing prohibition against local government imposition of taxes on tobacco products

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Smoking kills more people in Oregon than alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, illegal drugs and suicide combined, with hundreds more dying from smokeless tobacco. Scientific studies, and experience in state after state, show that higher cigarette taxes are one of the most effective ways to reduce smoking among both youth and adults.

Therefore, the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Oregon (TOFCO) supports removing the prohibition against local government ability to tax tobacco products.

TOFCO is a statewide not for profit organization that includes businesses, organizations and individuals who advocate for programs and policies that will decrease the toll of tobacco-use in Oregon. TOFCO has long advocated for an increase in the state tobacco tax. The removal of the prohibition against local government imposition of taxes on tobacco products is a step in the right direction to reduce tobacco consumption.

Increasing the price of tobacco products is a proven strategy to reduce tobacco consumption and prevent youth initiation of tobacco use, which had been identified by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as evidence-based best practice for tobacco prevention.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States and in Oregon and is associated with numerous serious diseases, including multiple cancers, diseases of the respiratory and cardiovascular systems, and strokes. Tobacco use causes almost 7,000 deaths a year in Oregon.

In spite of those statistics, some sixteen percent of Oregon high school students continue to smoke. Further, use of smokeless tobacco is on the rise, coinciding with the introduction of a new wave of smokeless tobacco products. And Oregon has been chosen by both Philip Morris and RJ Reynolds to test market new smokeless tobacco products.

Most experts agree that the diseases caused by tobacco use result in burdensome costs to society apart from and in addition to the loss of life, including higher medical expenditures for smokers, lost economic productivity due to smoker illness and mortality, and environmental smoke-related health complications in nonsmokers.

HB 2870 will give local jurisdictions a tool in their tool kit to reduce smoking and save lives as well as generate desperately needed revenue and reduce health care costs. Further, by providing at least 20 percent of the revenue for public health programs and services. HB 2870 assures that those who have been harmed by tobacco can receive the care and cessation assistance they need and deserve.

I urge your support for House Bill 2870, removing prohibition against local government imposition of taxes on tobacco products.