

Vermont Consumers

January 15, 1994

NAME

ADDRESS

ADDRESS

Dear :

As you know, the state legislature is currently working to develop a massive new statewide health system. But did you also know that Vermonters who smoke will be hit with a huge tax increase to help pay the costs of this \$38 million program?

That's right -- Vermont legislators are considering doubling the state excise tax you pay on a pack of cigarettes from 20 cents to 40 cents.

The legislature made no secret of its intolerance for people who choose to smoke when it banned smoking in restaurants, stores, and all other public buildings last year. And now, the legislature is back, this time to punish people who smoke with a 100% tax increase. It is time for smokers to stand up and say enough is enough!

This proposal is now being considered by the House Special Committee on Health Care. The names and addresses of the legislators who serve on that committee are listed below. It is essential that these legislators know that there is

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strong opposition to this tax increase. You can express your opposition by writing a letter to the Special Committee member who lives closest to you. After you've written your letter, you may want to send copies to your state senator and representative. You can write to them at the following address:

Name

address

Below are writing points that other people have used in letters to legislators on this topic. You may want to make similar points. I've enclosed a postage-paid envelope for you to use when mailing your letter.

After you've written and mailed your letter, please fill out the reply card on the bottom of this page and return it to us in the enclosed pre-addressed, postage paid business reply envelope to let us know how significant opposition is to this proposal. If you have any questions, please call our toll-free hotline at 1-800-231-1438 between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., Eastern Time Monday through Friday.

Your letter can make a difference. Please act today.

Sincerely,

Jim Pontarelli

Talking Points

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- It is unfair and unrealistic for Vermont legislators to push for a tax increase that, together with President Clinton's plan to increase taxes, would force Vermont smokers to pay \$9.50 in new state and federal taxes on every carton of cigarettes they buy.

- Vermont smokers already pay more than \$34 million in state and federal cigarette taxes each year, taxes that non-smokers do not pay. Smokers should not have to pay even more in order to fund a government program that is the responsibility of all taxpayers.

- Tobacco tax increases rarely succeed in generating the amount of revenue they are expected to. A decline in sales means that less tax revenue will be collected. We cannot afford to fund this massive new government program on unreliable revenue sources. Relying on tobacco taxes is probably the least dependable thing legislators could do.

- State legislators have already demonstrated their disapproval of smoking. Last year our legislators enacted strict smoking restrictions which make it illegal to enjoy a cigarette in a restaurant or other public place. Now our elected officials want to force smokers to pay more for the state's health care system.

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