

**From:** [Mary Williams](#)  
**To:** [LRO](#)  
**Subject:** HB 2270 Tobacco Tax Op-eds & Letters  
**Date:** Monday, June 17, 2019 4:31:46 PM  
**Attachments:** [4\\_5\\_2019\\_Albany\\_Democrat\\_Herald\\_Sam\\_Blankenship\\_Letter.pdf](#)  
[4\\_5\\_2019\\_Statesman\\_Dr\\_Bud\\_Pierce\\_Guest\\_Opinion.pdf](#)  
[4\\_5\\_2019\\_Dalles\\_Chronicle\\_AmericanCancer\\_Society\\_Volunteer\\_Marilyn\\_Wong\\_Op-ed.pdf](#)  
[4\\_7\\_2019\\_Observer\\_Alphonsus\\_Medical\\_Center\\_CEO\\_Kenneth\\_Hart\\_Oped\\_Guest\\_Opinion.pdf](#)  
[4\\_7\\_2019\\_Oregonian\\_Thoracic\\_Society\\_President\\_Dr\\_Moseson\\_Letter\\_Tobacco\\_Tax\\_A\\_Start.pdf](#)  
[4\\_11\\_2019\\_Malheur\\_Enterprise\\_Alphonsus\\_Medical\\_Center\\_CEO\\_Kenneth\\_Hart\\_Letter.pdf](#)  
[4\\_23\\_2019\\_Portland\\_Tribune\\_Editorial\\_Tobacco\\_Bills\\_Are\\_Good\\_For\\_Public\\_Health.pdf](#)  
[4\\_24\\_2019\\_Eastern\\_Oregonian\\_AmericanCancer\\_Society\\_Volunteer\\_Karen\\_Malcolm\\_Op-ed.pdf](#)  
[4\\_25\\_2019\\_Tribune\\_Virginia\\_Garcia\\_Health\\_Ctr\\_Medical\\_Dir\\_Dr\\_Ann\\_Turner\\_Op-ed.pdf](#)  
[5\\_26\\_2019\\_Oregonian\\_Oregon\\_Center\\_for\\_Public\\_Policy\\_Alejandro\\_Queral\\_Guest\\_Opinion.pdf](#)

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Hello Issac and Austin:

Please see the attached letters to the editor and opinion pieces regarding tobacco taxes and the passage of HB 2270 for testimony in today's public hearing in JTax.

Attached are:

April 5, 2019- Statesman Journal, Oncologist & American Cancer Society Board Member Dr. Bud Pierce guest opinion

April 5, 2019- Dalles Chronicle, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Volunteer, Marilyn Wong letter

April 5, 2019- Albany Democrat Herald, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Volunteer Sam Blankenship letter

April 7, 2019- Argus Observer, Saint Alphonsus Medical Center CEO Kenneth Hart guest opinion

April 7, 2019- Oregonian, President of Oregon Thoracic Society Dr. Erika Moseson letter

April 11, 2019- Malheur Enterprise, Saint Alphonsus Medical Center CEO Kenneth Hart letter

April 23, 2019- Portland Tribune Editorial, Tobacco Bills are good for public health

April 24, 2019- Eastern Oregonian, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Volunteer Karen Malcolm letter

April 25, 2019- Portland Tribune, Virginia Garcia Health Center Medical Director Ann Turner guest opinion

May 26, 2019- Oregonian, Oregon Center for Public Policy Alejandro Queral guest opinion

Best,

Mary Williams

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Account Manager/Lobbyist

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## **Mailbag: Approves of cigarette tax hike**

**Apr 5, 2019**

[https://democratherald.com/opinion/letters/mailbag-approves-of-cigarette-tax-hike/article\\_5df8a36e-5cb7-5da4-a19f-5a1a8bb26a0d.html?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_campaign=user-share](https://democratherald.com/opinion/letters/mailbag-approves-of-cigarette-tax-hike/article_5df8a36e-5cb7-5da4-a19f-5a1a8bb26a0d.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share)

I have lost several family members and close family friends to tobacco related cancers. This is why I want to reduce cancer rates and tobacco use. Did you know smoking causes nearly 30 percent of cancer deaths?

Oregon lawmakers want to raise the price of cigarettes by \$2 per pack and make all other tobacco products like e-cigarettes more expensive. As an American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network volunteer advocate, I support this because this is a proven way to reduce the amount of tobacco users in our state. Also this helps reduce the leading preventable cause of cancer and cancer deaths.

A significant tobacco tax increase will keep kids from becoming addicted and help people quit. Lives will be saved from a preventable death. A \$2 cigarette tax increase will save nearly 13,700 Oregon lives. It will also help more than 31,000 adults quit smoking and reduce youth smoking rates by 21 percent.

It will also generate millions of dollars in new revenue. The state can use that money to fund Medicaid and programs to help reduce smoking rates. Sounds like a winning combination to me.

Senator Fred Girod, please support this lifesaving tobacco tax increase. It will generate revenue, reduce tobacco use and save Oregon lives.

Sam Blankenship  
Lebanon (April 5)



### Raise Oregon's tax on cigarettes by \$2 a pack

Raising the cigarette tax by \$2 per pack with a similar increase on other tobacco products and e-cigarettes would generate nearly \$173...



Legislature has opportunity to reform youth justice



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor: Steelhead, vaccinations

# Guest Opinion: Raise Oregon's per pack cigarette tax by \$2 to save lives, protect kids, prevent cancer

Dr. Bud Pierce, Guest Opinion Published 5:29 p.m. PT April 5, 2019

<https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/opinion/2019/04/05/oregon-lawmakers-save-lives-reduce-health-care-costs-tobacco-tax-guest-opinion-bud-pierce/3324760002/>

Cancer is the leading cause of death in Oregon, and smoking causes nearly 28 percent of cancer deaths in the state. As an oncologist, I've cared for countless Oregonians who've suffered and died because of tobacco addiction. I don't want other Oregon families torn apart by a preventable death.

I support efforts to save lives and prevent disease by making tobacco products more expensive. Oregon lawmakers are considering legislation to raise the cigarette tax by \$2 per pack and increase the price of all other tobacco products including electronic cigarettes by equal rates.

Raising the price of tobacco products through regular, significant tax increases is one of the most effective ways to help people quit and keep kids from becoming addicted.

Youth are particularly sensitive to price. Preventing kids from a lifetime of tobacco addiction is critical amid a youth e-cigarette epidemic.

E-cigarette use has risen 78 percent among high schoolers nationwide in the past year. Nearly 13 percent of Oregon 11th graders currently use e-cigarettes and nearly half say the first tobacco product they've ever used was an e-cigarette, according to the Oregon Healthy Youth Survey.

Most tobacco addiction starts in adolescence, and this year, 1,400 Oregon kids will become new daily smokers.

E-cigarettes are not currently taxed in the state. Oregon has also not raised its cigarette tax in a significant way to impact smoking rates since 2002. Right now, we rank 32nd in the nation for our cigarette tax.



Dr. Bud Pierce (Photo: Courtesy of Greg Gibson)

A \$2 per pack cigarette tax increase will have a profound impact on preventing death. Projections show it will help 31,300 adults who currently smoke quit and keep 19,200 kids under age 18 from becoming daily smokers. Youth smoking rates would decrease nearly 21 percent and overall, 13,700 lives would be saved from a premature smoking-related death.

As if these aren't enough reasons, raising the tobacco tax will benefit the state and residents financially. Tobacco use costs Oregon more than \$1.5 billion in annual health care costs. Each household pays \$1,700 in taxes to cover the government expenditures caused by smoking. The decline in smoking rates from a \$2 per pack increase would lead to \$1.02 billion in long-term health care savings.

Raising the cigarette tax by \$2 per pack with a similar increase on other tobacco products and e-cigarettes is projected to generate nearly \$173 million in new annual revenue. This revenue would help fund Oregon's Medicaid program, which spends nearly \$374 million annually to treat smoking. A portion of the new revenue would also fund vital tobacco prevention and education programs.

Our lawmakers can save lives and reduce health care costs. I urge them to support Oregon's tobacco tax increase to prevent death, reduce health care costs and stop a lifetime of addiction.

*Dr. Bud Pierce is an oncologist at Oregon Oncology Specialists. He is a member of the American Cancer Society Oregon SW Washington board of directors and an advocate with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. He can be reached at [BudSelmaPierce@msn.com](mailto:BudSelmaPierce@msn.com)*



# The Dalles Chronicle

**Letter to the Editor: Keep tobacco away from kids Friday, April 5, 2019**

[https://www.thedalleschronicle.com/opinion/letter-to-the-editor-keep-tobacco-away-from-kids/article\\_977541c2-57ed-11e9-a79c-3ff2577bc500.html](https://www.thedalleschronicle.com/opinion/letter-to-the-editor-keep-tobacco-away-from-kids/article_977541c2-57ed-11e9-a79c-3ff2577bc500.html)

To the editor:

Oregon kids have easy access to tobacco. That's not surprising since e-cigarettes aren't taxed in Oregon and our cigarette tax is below average. Cheap tobacco is one reason why 2,100 Oregon kids will become new daily smokers this year. I want to protect Oregon's kids from a lifetime of addiction that can cause cancer and early death. We can do that by raising the tax on cigarettes and all other tobacco products, including e-cigarettes. Kids are price sensitive and this will prevent them from starting.

Years of tobacco use due to the addicting quality of tobacco often times leads to COPD, emphysema and cancer. As a pharmacist, I see the very expensive prices insurance companies and the Oregon Health Plan pay for the treatment of medical conditions caused by tobacco use. Also, the cost of anti-smoking products are high and often patients fail treatment.

I'm encouraged by talks in the Capitol to raise the state's tobacco tax. Lawmakers have proposed a \$2 per pack cigarette tax increase and an equal tax on e-cigarettes and all other tobacco products. It would keep over 19,000 Oregon kids from becoming new smokers.

If a tax increase could keep just one kid from picking up a cigarette, it'd be worth it to me. Knowing it could help thousands of kids makes this is a no-brainer.

As an American Cancer Society Cancer Action Volunteer, I urge Senator Bill Hansel to support a tobacco tax increase.

Marilyn Wong

The Dalles

GUEST OPINION

## Increase price of tobacco to save lives, taxpayer dollars

BY KENNETH HART  
SPECIAL TO THE ARGUS OBSERVER

No one knows Oregonians' health better than the state's health-care providers. Our providers are there when babies are born, we provide support to parents as they raise their children, and help patients with end-of-life care. Oregon's health-care providers truly dedicate their lives and careers to the health and lives of all.

However, there are still many preventable deaths in Oregon every year. Currently, tobacco causes almost 8,000 deaths per year, more than motor and firearm accidents, alcohol and illegal drugs combined. In Malheur County, nearly 25 percent of all adults smoke, and eastern Oregon has one of the highest rates of tobacco-related deaths in the state. These numbers show tobacco use continues to take a toll on the health of not only smokers, but also newborn babies, youth and families.



Hart

In addition to the physical toll tobacco takes on Oregonians, the costs weigh heavily on our health care system. Tobacco and nicotine add millions of dollars in health care costs in order to treat smoking-related illness. These costs are passed on to Oregonians at the price of \$1,700 per household, per year or a total of \$1.54 billion dollars annually. The cost of tobacco-related illnesses among those who receive care through the state's Medicaid program, the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), was \$347 million in 2010, roughly 9 percent of total OHP expenditures. This cost to the state will only continue to grow if nothing is done.

Nationally, Oregon ranks 32nd in the per-pack tax on cigarettes. This low-cost threshold contributes to our high smoking rates and subsequent health care costs to our system. The proposed \$2 per pack increase and wholesale tax on e-cigarettes would help more than 31,300 adults quit, stop 19,200 youth from starting to smoke cigarettes or e-cigarettes, and prevent 4,000 infants from being born with complications due to mothers smoking during pregnancy. Funds generated will provide medical coverage of low-income individuals and families on OHP, help stabilize health insurance costs, and support tobacco cessation and prevention programs. Furthermore, Oregon would receive long-term health care cost savings of more than \$1 billion dollars per year.

Tobacco and nicotine addiction continue to cost Oregonians their lives and cause serious health problems, while adding hundreds of millions of dollars to our health-care costs. The new generation of e-cigarettes are not safe either and pose health serious hazards, especially to youth and young adults, who increasingly use e-cigarettes. It's time for Oregon lawmakers to stand up to the powerful tobacco industry that has been targeting our communities for decades. Passing Oregon House Bill 2270 will reduce the use of tobacco and e-cigarettes, save lives, pay for health-care costs, and help provide health care for vulnerable children and working families.

I urge you to contact your legislator and join me in asking them to vote "Yes" on House Bill 2270 to reduce the toll big tobacco takes on Oregonians' health and our state budget.

**KENNETH HART** is the president of Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Ontario. The views and opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of The Argus Observer.



## Mueller Report: Seeing is believing

"I bet your hippie freak free love liberal heart is rife with pain and anguish over the Mueller Report," my friend, Conservative Bill chided.

(In case you hadn't figured it out, Bill is my imaginary conservative friend. You can tell because only imaginary friends use words like "rife," and "anguish" in casual conversation. I'm taking artistic license to make a larger point. I hope you don't mind.)

So getting back to my anecdote ... "My heart is rife with nothing but red and white blood cells and plasma," I defiantly retorted. (I'm always quick-witted and erudite when debating imaginary opponents.)

"Ah," Bill said with a self-satisfied, smug smile. "Typical liberal. You refused to accept the result of the election and now you're refusing to accept the result of the Mueller Report."

"Bill, my friend," I calmly replied. "I fully accept the results of the election. Hillary was a terrible candidate who ran a dismal campaign, and that's that. Furthermore, criticizing a president whose policies make me want to rip out what's left of my hair out isn't a sign that I don't accept the election. It's a sign that I think he's doing a bad job. There's a difference."

"That may be true," Bill replied. "But I get the sense that you don't like the results of the Mueller Report."

"I neither like nor dislike the



RANDOM ACTS  
OF WRITING

Craig Carter

results of the Mueller Report," I replied. "The only person who's read the whole thing is Attorney General William Barr. So the so-called results of the Mueller Reports are just Barr's assessment of what's in the report."

"Well, there you go!" Bill asserted.

"The Attorney General of the US of A has told you what the report says. Why would he lie?"

"Bill," I sighed. "I hate to be a wet blanket, but we are dealing with an administration who say they like to deal in 'alternative facts,' and who have said things like, 'truth isn't truth,' and 'don't believe what you see and hear, only believe what I tell you.' You're going to have to excuse my pickiness here, but I'm not going to implicitly accept an administration official's assessment of what the report says. If the actual report says the president is innocent, I'll accept it. But we don't know the report actually says that, now do we?"

"Aha!" Bob cried. "I knew it! Typical snowflake liberal! You can't accept the truth. Face it. You're just being obtuse."

"No, Bob," I said. "I'm really not

being obtuse. Look at it this way, if it were a Democrat who was being investigated, would you implicitly believe the conclusions drawn by a presidential appointee, or would you want to wait until you saw the actual report?"

Well, needless to say, my imaginary debate with my imaginary friend took place before the news broke that investigators on Mueller's team have expressed concern that the Attorney General has glossed over the results of their investigation, and they've even gone so far as saying there are a lot of "troubling" things in the report regarding President Trump.

"So I suppose you're going to take that to mean the Mueller Report says the president is guilty of collusion and obstructing justice," Bill just magically appeared into the room to say.

Not at all, Bill. It's still the same situation. For all we know, the Mueller Report could very well exonerate the president, but by the same token, for all we know, it could also say he's guilty as sin. We won't know until we see the actual report, will we?

**CRAIG CARTER** is an Ontario resident and can be reached in care of The Argus Observer, 1160 S.W. Fourth St., Ontario, OR 97914. The views and opinions expressed in this column do not necessarily represent those of the Argus Observer.

### ELECTED OFFICIALS

# Readers respond: \$2 tobacco tax a start

Oregonian

April 7, 2019; 8:00 AM

<https://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/2019/04/readers-respond-2-tobacco-tax-a-start.html>

## Letter to the Editor

I am a physician who cares for patients in the intensive care unit and in a lung specialty clinic. Every day I try to help fellow Oregonians suffering from the toxic and lethal effects of tobacco, from lung cancer to asthma to heart attacks and strokes. Cigarettes kill half of regular users. The companies selling these devastating products profit from addicting children and teens to a lifelong nicotine habit.



Our lawmakers want to raise the cost of a pack of cigarettes by \$2 as well as make gateway devices like e-cigarettes more expensive. Vaping is epidemic among our youth, and teens who start vaping are more likely to start smoking, which is why Big Tobacco is buying up e-cigarettes and lobbying as hard as they can in Salem.

Most smokers want to quit, and there are effective interventions that can double or quadruple their chances of doing so, but funding these is essential. A simple \$2 tobacco tax will help fund tobacco cessation programs and contribute to Medicaid funding. The American Lung Association, the American Cancer Society and the Oregon Thoracic Society support this tax. It will save lives and decrease the number of teens who start smoking and become lifelong victims of the tobacco industry, generating escalating health care costs that affect all of us.

We are subsidizing tobacco companies by paying more in health insurance premiums, taxes and sick leave to benefit these corporations' bottom lines.

Only \$2 per pack? It's a start.

Erika Maria Moseson

Moseson is president of the Oregon Thoracic Society



## COMMENTARY



## Letter to the Editor - April 10

A reader from Ontario, Kenneth Hart, president of Saint Alphonse Medical Center Ontario, makes his case for a proposed house bill that would increase the tax on tobacco products.

April 11, 2019 at 2:24pm

No one knows Oregonians' health better than the state's health care providers.

Our providers are there when babies are born, we provide support to parents as they raise their children, and help patients with end-of-life care. Oregon's health care providers truly dedicate their lives and careers to the health and lives of all.

However, there are still many preventable deaths in Oregon every year. Currently, tobacco causes almost 8,000 deaths per year, more than motor and firearm accidents, alcohol, and illegal drugs combined.

In Malheur County, nearly 25 percent of all adults smoke, and Eastern Oregon has one of the highest rates of tobacco-related deaths in the state. These numbers show tobacco use continues to take a toll on the health of not only smokers, but also newborn babies, youth, and families.

In addition to the physical toll tobacco takes on Oregonians, the costs weigh heavily on our health care system. Tobacco and nicotine add millions of dollars in health care costs in order to treat smoking-related illness.

These costs are passed on to Oregonians at the price of \$1,700 per household, per year or a total of \$1.54 billion dollars annually. The cost of tobacco-related illnesses among those who receive care through the state's Medicaid program, the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), was \$347 million in 2010, roughly 9 percent of total OHP expenditures. This cost to the state will only continue to grow if nothing is done.

Nationally, Oregon ranks 32nd in the per-pack tax on cigarettes. This low-cost threshold contributes to our high smoking rates and subsequent health care costs to our system. The proposed \$2 per pack increase and wholesale tax on e-cigarettes would help more than 31,300 adults quit, stop 19,200 youth from starting to smoke cigarettes or e-cigarettes, and prevent 4,000 infants from being born with complications due to mothers smoking during pregnancy.

Funds generated will provide medical coverage of low-income individuals and families on OHP, help stabilize health insurance costs, and support tobacco cessation and prevention programs. Furthermore, Oregon would receive long-term health care cost savings of more than \$1 billion dollars per year.

Tobacco and nicotine addiction continue to cost Oregonians their lives and cause serious health problems, while adding hundreds of millions of dollars to our health care costs. The new generation of e-cigarettes are not safe either and pose health serious hazards, especially to youth and young adults, who increasingly use e-cigarettes.

It's time for Oregon lawmakers to stand up to the powerful tobacco industry that has been targeting our communities for decades. Passing Oregon House Bill 2270 will reduce the use of tobacco and e-cigarettes, save lives, pay for health care costs, and help provide health care for vulnerable children and working families.

I urge you to contact your legislator and join me in asking them to vote "Yes" on House Bill 2270 to reduce the toll big tobacco takes on Oregonians' health and our state budget.

*Kenneth Hart is president, Saint Alphonsus Medical Center Ontario.*

## **Our Opinion: Tobacco bills are good for public health** **The Tribune Tuesday, April 23, 2019**

<https://pamplinmedia.com/pt/10-opinion/426095-332554-our-opinion-tobacco-bills-are-good-for-public-health#> =

It also is true that a tax on cigarettes is unusual - compared to other taxes - in that the raising of money is only the secondary purpose. The primary purpose is to make cigarettes expensive enough that people stop buying them.

We thoroughly back a package of bills in the Oregon Legislature to increase taxes for cigarettes, cigars and e-cigarette, or vaping, products.

First, to the issue of cigarettes: Tobacco products, when used as intended by their manufacturers, can lead to serious diseases and death. This makes tobacco products unique. Normally, you have to abuse a product to make it deadly. Not tobacco. The disease and potential for death are a feature, not a bug.

It also is true that a tax on cigarettes is unusual — compared to other taxes — in that the raising of money is only the secondary purpose. The primary purpose is to make cigarettes expensive enough that people stop buying them. Especially teenagers, who tend to be more price-sensitive than adults.

Almost nobody gets addicted to cigarettes in their 30s or later. If you become addicted, you do so as a teenager. If a higher price tag means fewer 13-, 15- or 17-year-olds will take up the habit, then we're all for it.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tobacco remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States and around the world. Tobacco use is a major factor in four out of the five leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung disease and stroke. It causes about a third of heart disease and cancer, and most cases of emphysema.

We also reject the argument that a tax on cigarettes is regressive, and that it hits low-income Oregonians harder than rich Oregonians. That might well be true. But the costs of heart disease, lung disease, cancer, stroke and emphysema hit low-income people harder than rich people, too. Improving the health of low-income Oregonians can't possibly be considered a regressive idea.

Gov. Kate Brown has proposed \$2-per-pack tax increase.

Currently, Oregon's state tax on cigarettes is \$1.33 per pack.

State and federal taxes account for 39% of the total cigarette pack price, based on the state average retail price. The state average retail price for a pack of cigarettes in Oregon currently is \$6. This includes \$1.33 in Oregon state tax and \$1.01 in federal tax.

Other proposals before the lawmakers would remove the 50-cent tax cap on cigars and impose a 95% wholesale tax on electronic cigarettes.

This last bit is a proposal from the Oregon Health Authorities. It would create a tax on "inhalant delivery systems," which include e-cigarettes, at a rate of 65% of the wholesale price. Currently, Oregon does not tax these products.

Cigars now are taxed at 65% of the wholesale price, but the tax is capped at 50 cents. OHA's proposal would remove the tax cap on cigars.

If tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death, vaping products are working hard to earn that distinction as well. Vaping has been called an epidemic by public health officials throughout the nation.

Testifying earlier this month before the Legislature, three Oregon high school students, including Tess Wright of Beaverton High School, said "vaping" has become a problem in classrooms everywhere. One product, Juul, has interrupted their education, they said, because students can vape in class, in the bathroom or anywhere else, thanks to the product being so discrete. Juul devices are small, can look like flash drives, and emit little or no visible vapor.

According to the nonprofit Truth Initiative, Juul sales increased 641 percent from 2016 to 2017.

A tax policy analyst for Juul Labs told legislators that the company's goal is to rid the world of cigarettes. However, in December, Altria, one of the largest cigarette makers in the world, announced a \$13 billion investment in Juul.

We also dismiss the argument that raising cigarette taxes will make smokers cross the border for cheaper purchases. Jon Hart, an economist for the Oregon Department of Revenue, told lawmakers that Washingtonians buy a significant amount of cigarettes in Oregon and smuggle it back north because Oregon's taxes are lower. The proposed tax increase would put Oregon closer to the taxing level of Washington and California. Idaho still would be significantly lower, Hart said, but the eastern part of the state is so sparsely populated that he doesn't believe a significant number of Oregonians would drive east to save a couple dollars per pack.

At the end of the day, we could quibble with the cigar tax, possibly. But there's so much public health good in this package of bills, we back their passage in this year's legislative session.

We praise Gov. Brown for taking the leadership on this issue, and we urge area lawmakers to back the tobacco-related bills.

# EAST OREGONIAN

**Higher tobacco taxes a win-win Wednesday, April 24, 2019**

[https://www.eastoregonian.com/opinion/letters/letter-higher-tobacco-taxes-a-win-win/article\\_14eef180-66ac-11e9-b22e-dbd720791ab5.html?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_campaign=user-share](https://www.eastoregonian.com/opinion/letters/letter-higher-tobacco-taxes-a-win-win/article_14eef180-66ac-11e9-b22e-dbd720791ab5.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share)

What if I told you the state can raise revenue, reduce health care costs and save thousands of lives from cancer and preventable death? It's simple: Raise the price of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death and causes nearly 30% of cancer deaths. My second mom Shirley was to be at my college graduation. She died three months before that day came from tobacco-related cancer. I miss Shirley so much. Saving lives from cancer matters to me.

I support our lawmakers in Salem as they consider a \$2 per pack cigarette tax increase and a price increase on all other tobacco products including e-cigarettes. Kids are using e-cigarettes at alarming rates and we must protect them from a lifetime of addiction. Making tobacco products more expensive helps people who smoke quit and ensures kids never start.

A \$2 per pack cigarette tax increase would cut Oregon's youth smoking rates by 21% and save 13,700 lives from a premature death. Additionally, the state would save about \$1 billion in long-term health care costs as smoking rates declined, while raising hundreds of millions of dollars in new revenue.

Sounds like a winning combination.

As an American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network volunteer advocate, I support this tobacco tax increase. I urge Senator Hansell and State Representative Greg Barreto to support it too. Let's reduce the burden of tobacco.

**Karen Malcolm, Pendleton**

**My View: Higher taxes could curb teen smoking Thursday, April 25, 2019**

<https://pamplinmedia.com/pt/10-opinion/426596-332142-my-view-higher-taxes-could-curb-teen-smoking>

**Ann Turner is a retired physician who served as medical director/co-director at Virginia Garcia Medical Health Center in Washington County.**

Opportunities to blunt a public health crisis are rare. But our legislators have that opportunity right now.

The epidemic I'm talking about is driven by tobacco, laced with the powerful addictive substance, nicotine. Not many products can claim to kill more than half the people who use it when used correctly.

Indeed, the tobacco epidemic has been tapering off — after companies confessed they knew their product was deadly. But the tobacco industry has regrouped and targets people in low-income areas, communities of color and tribal populations, and even children.

Now, legislators in Salem are deciding whether to adopt a tool that's been proven to be effective in reducing and even preventing nicotine addiction, saving the costs of chronic illnesses, lung cancer and death. They need to hear that we support a \$2 tax on a pack of cigarettes and taxes on E-cigarettes.

Here's why you should:

Tobacco use is the No. 1 cause of preventable deaths in Oregon. It totals more deaths than obesity, alcohol, motor vehicle and firearms accidents, and illegal drug use combined.

Cigarettes kill more than 8,000 Oregonians each year. Tobacco costs Oregonians — for medical expenses, lost productivity and early death — over \$2 billion each year.

While smoking rates have been cut in half in the past 20 years, the tobacco industry has been remarkably successful in tempting nonsmokers with E-cigarettes, which are manufactured with high nicotine levels and infused with flavors like mango and mint.

Rates of "vaping," that is using E-cigarette vaporizers, nearly doubled among high school students from 2017 to 2018. This is insidious because nicotine impairs brain development in children.

Unlike other teen fads, outgrowing vaping will be difficult, and for some impossible, because with the high levels of nicotine they contain, children become addicted quickly. A new generation of addicts ensures a billion-dollar future for the tobacco industry.

But a tax? In Oregon?

I know. But study after study has demonstrated that when the price of tobacco rises, the number of users declines.

The American Lung Association calculates that for every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes, consumption is cut by 4% in adults and 7% in children.

In Oregon, that means 19,000 kids would be prevented from smoking and 31,300 adults would quit.

But the American Lung Association gave Oregon a failing grade on the level of state tobacco taxes. At \$1.33 a pack, Oregon's tax is less than half that of Washington state.

E-cigarettes, the fastest growing tobacco product in Oregon, are not taxed at all in Oregon but they should be. This would be effective because kids are very "price sensitive."

Finally, it's about money. In Oregon, raising taxes will drive down the cost of treating expensive and deadly illnesses — emphysema, cancer, heart disease — caused by smoking.

Additionally, revenues raised will provide a stable source of funding for the Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid). For low-income families in Oregon, the Oregon Health Plan is critical for their health and well-being, making it possible for them to continue to be productive members of our community.

So please call, write, email or visit your legislator and tell them you support a higher price on tobacco products to save lives, especially the lives of our children and at-risk communities.

*Dr. Ann Turner is a retired physician who served as medical director/co-director at Virginia Garcia Medical Health Center in Washington County.*

# Opinion: Raising tobacco taxes benefits low-income Oregonians

Posted May 26, 2019



By Guest Columnist

By Alejandro Queral

Queral is executive director of the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

The Marlboro Man hung up his spurs and Joe Camel was put out to pasture long ago, but marketing by tobacco companies hasn't gone away. Not by a long shot. In Oregon alone, Big Tobacco spends some \$115 million a year peddling its deadly product, according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Barred by law from certain forms of advertising, tobacco companies have also turned to social media to lure young audiences.

Cigarettes and other tobacco products take a heavy toll on the health and finances of people in our state, especially low-income Oregonians. Reducing this burden alone is a very good reason to support the tobacco tax package proposed by Gov. Kate Brown.

Tobacco killed nearly 8,000 Oregonians in 2016, making it the number one cause of preventable death in the state. Most worrisome, tobacco is already laying claim to future casualties: according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, more than 15,000 high school students in Oregon already smoke.



Besides its impact on health, tobacco use also comes with a steep financial cost. The costs of health care due to tobacco use in Oregon surpassed \$1.4 billion in 2013, data from the Oregon Health Authority show. Family finances suffer too. A household with one smoker who consumes one pack per day may spend about \$2,200 a year – a significant sum, especially for low-income families.

How can Oregon slow down the health and financial ravages of this deadly product? Raise the price and invest the revenue in prevention, cessation, and health care. Gov. Brown's proposal would up the cigarette tax by \$2 per pack and raise taxes on other forms of tobacco. While the main goal of the plan is ensure that the Oregon Health Plan has enough resources to provide health coverage to low- and moderate-income Oregonians, the governor's plan also devotes a portion of the new revenue to tobacco prevention and cessation efforts.

Cynically, tobacco companies may claim that tobacco taxes are regressive because they disproportionately impact the poor. But it is low-income communities who would benefit the most from an increase in tobacco taxes.

Low-income people are more likely to smoke, and that is no accident. They are often the target of advertising campaigns by the tobacco industry. Not only are children from these communities bombarded with ads selling a highly addictive product, they are also more exposed to tobacco products. Researchers have found that communities with high rates of poverty have higher densities of tobacco retailers. And these products are not your grandpa's Lucky Strikes. From cookies 'n cream e-cigarettes to wild berry cigars, these tobacco products target young people with years of addiction ahead of them.

Raising the price of tobacco has a deterrent effect. Our organization, the Oregon Center for Public Policy, estimates that a \$2 increase in the cost of a pack of cigarettes would prompt between 52,000 and 86,000 current smokers to quit, based on our analysis of data from the Oregon Health Authority and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As valuable as deterrence is, it's not the most significant piece of the governor's proposal when it comes to tobacco use. The best way to address tobacco consumption is preventing people from getting hooked in the first place and helping those who smoke quit. Oregon's Tobacco Prevention and Education Program employs counter-marketing strategies and cessation-support interventions proven to work. Additional funding will enable the state to help more people.

The governor's tobacco tax package is good for our state, protecting funding for the Oregon Health Plan while cutting down the number of smokers. With the legislative session entering its final phase, lawmakers should not delay further in enacting this important bill that will save lives and improve the health of Oregonians.