

NEWS RELEASE
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**Support for Cigarette Tax Increase in North Carolina
Continues to Grow:**

***Teachers, State Employees, and Hispanics
Among Those Joining the Alliance Efforts***

Raleigh - The state's two largest employees' associations along with more grassroots organizations turned out today at the NC General Assembly to voice their support for increasing the cigarette tax from 5-cents a pack to 75-cents a pack.

SEANC - the state's employee association and NCAE - the state's teacher association along with El Pueblo - a statewide Latino organization, Covenant with North Carolina's Children - a statewide group interested in improving the lives of children, and the League of Women Voters, were among the most recent groups to join the Alliance's efforts in activating "**Pass the Word**" - a communications network that alerts its members to those legislators who support an increase in the state's cigarette tax.

This event is part of the 2nd Annual Alliance Advocacy Day which included hundreds of teens, parents and concerned citizens wearing purple tee shirts with the slogan "75 Saves Lives" visiting face-to-face with their lawmakers and encouraging them to take a stand for North Carolina's children by voting for a tax increase of 75-cents per pack.

"One of the things that we can do, that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says is the most effective way to prevent children from smoking, is to increase North Carolina's cigarette tax by 75 cents," said Alliance executive director Pam Seamans. "But, if the legislature waits another year to raise the cigarette tax - lets yet another legislative session come and go - legislators will have failed to protect the 66 kids who start to smoke everyday here in North Carolina. That is 24,500 kids this year that this Legislature will have failed to protect. Whose kids will it be? One of my kids? One of your kids?"

The CDC estimates that for every ten percent increase in the price of a pack of cigarettes, seven percent fewer children begin to smoke. Nationwide, the average cigarette tax is 72.9 cents. Late last month, Virginia increased its cigarette tax to 20 cents for this year and 30 cents in 2005 and thereafter.

Other organizations that have endorsed an increase in the state's cigarette tax include:

American Cancer Society
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
National Association of Social Workers
NC Association of Local Health Directors
NC Health Access Coalition
North Carolina Medical Review, Inc.
NC Public Health Association
NC Pediatric Society

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