

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **AS CIGARETTE TAXES INCREASE, “THERE”S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO QUIT SMOKING”**

Indianapolis – In the wake of a dramatic price increase on cigarettes, Hoosiers are seeking help to quit smoking in record numbers.

In early March, the major tobacco companies hiked prices ahead of an increase in the federal excise tobacco tax scheduled for April. In the first week following the tobacco industry price increases, the number of calls to the free Indiana Tobacco Quitline – 1-800-QUIT-NOW – tripled reaching the highest level since was the service began three years ago.

“The truth is, the cost of smoking is becoming just too much for many Hoosiers especially those who are struggling to make ends meet in today’s tough economy,” says Jose Luis Romero, Bilingual Community Organizer, from the Indiana Latino Institute, Inc. “We want every smoker in our community to know that we’re here with free resources to help them break what we know is a powerful gripping addiction.”

Research shows that an increase in the price of tobacco products from a tax increase encourages adults to quit and youth not to start. In fact, numerous studies indicate that for every 10 percent increase in the price of cigarettes, youth smoking drops by 7 percent and overall cigarette consumption falls by about 4 percent.

Beginning in April, the federal tax on a pack of cigarettes is increased from 39 cents to \$1.01. In Indiana, it means that a pack of cigarettes will cost nearly \$5.

According to Maria Luisa Tishner, the revenue from the increased federal tobacco taxes are being used to expand the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), a federal initiative that will provides health services for low-income children.

Increasing, too, is the tax on “other tobacco products,” such as little cigars and smokeless tobacco. The tax on little cigars is increasing from a mere 3.7 cents to more than a

dollar and the tax on smokeless tobacco will nearly triple in price (from 4.4 cents/can to 11.3 cents/ca). The tax on products, such as full-sized cigars and pipe tobacco, is also going up.

“We’ve seen the tobacco industry target our youth with these “other tobacco products” and it’s important that the tax on these items are raised as well. The last thing we need is to create a demand for other tobacco products because they’re cheaper,” said Tishner.

Each year in the United States, tobacco use kills more than 400,000 people and costs the nation more than \$96 billion in health care costs. In Indiana, tobacco-related diseases claim the lives of more than 9,700 Hoosiers every year and account for health care losses estimated at \$2.08 billion.

A key resource, available to Hoosiers, is the free Indiana Tobacco Quitline – 1-800-QUIT-NOW (84-8669). Open every day from 8 a.m. until 3 a.m., the Quitline is staffed with trained quit coaches who are available to provide free tips and counseling on how to quit using tobacco.

“The benefits to quitting smoking literally last a lifetime,” said Tishner. “You’ll feel better, the food you eat will taste better... and most important, you’ll be living a healthier life with your family and friends for years to come”.

For more information related to quitting smoking, visit the Web site, [www.itpc.in.gov](http://www.itpc.in.gov), see your physician, or call the Indiana Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

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