

# THE ANSR

Association for Nonsmokers - Minnesota

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ANSR staff photo

Advocates celebrate after the Saint Paul City Council voted to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products to adult-only tobacco stores and raise the price of cigars to \$2.60 each to match surrounding cities.

## Saint Paul restricts sale of flavored tobacco

The Saint Paul City Council showed strong leadership in protecting the health and well-being of its residents on Jan. 6.

The City Council voted unanimously to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products to adult-only tobacco stores and increase the minimum price for single cigars to \$2.60 each. All cigars sold in

packages of four or less must be priced at \$2.60 each, while cigars packaged at four or more must be at least \$10.40.

"It's a big deal that we're going to make it harder for youth to access these products," council president Russ Stark said.

Saint Paul joins Minneapolis in restricting the sale of flavored

tobacco products. Other places to restrict flavored tobacco sales include Providence, R.I., and New York City.

Saint Paul was one of the first cities in the state to set a minimum price for cigars, but the ordinance

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ANSR staff photo

Above left, Traielle Godfrey spoke in favor of the ordinance at the close of the public hearing on the day of the vote. At right, members of the youth group Vision in Living Life “Change is Possible” are interviewed by the *Pioneer Press*’ Fred Melo about flavored tobacco.

will raise the price to \$2.60 to match surrounding cities.

“I think this is a good ordinance that sends a strong message to the tobacco industry,” said Councilmember Dai Thao, one of five co-sponsors of the ordinance. “We can’t trade the health of future generations for the tobacco industry’s profit.”

The room turned green as Councilmember Amy Brendmoen, who first introduced the ordinance, had supporters of the ordinance stand up.

Most of the advocates sported a green shirt that said, “The tobacco industry targets youth with flavored

tobacco ... but there’s nothing sweet about tobacco.”

The tobacco industry has a long history of targeting young people with cheap and flavored tobacco. Alicia Leizinger, from the Ramsey Tobacco Coalition, said she is thrilled Saint Paul is taking action to stop that.

“Saint Paul has once again proven itself to be a leader willing to stand up to the tobacco industry’s blatant attempts at hooking kids with candy flavored tobacco,” Leizinger said. “I’m proud of the young people who brought this issue to the attention of the City Council and urged

them to take action to protect Saint Paul’s youth.”

Council newcomer Jane Prince, who was sworn in the day before, also voiced her support. She pointed out how naysayers said the bar and restaurant industry would go under if smoking were banned in those places.

“But we’re thriving,” Prince said. “I’m supportive of this and appreciative of the young people who worked on this. The young man (Traielle Godfrey) who testified said it best. Candy-flavored tobacco products don’t have a place where children can enter.”



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## 2013 tobacco tax keeps on giving

Minnesota's cigarette tax automatically went up 10 cents on Jan. 1, the second increase in the past two years. In 2013, the state legislature increased the cigarette tax by \$1.60 and set in place an inflator that automatically adjusts the tax by a smaller amount every year in line with inflation. At \$3, Minnesota is now the seventh-highest taxed state. Each pack also has a \$1.01 federal tax.

The tax is extremely effective in reducing tobacco use, especially among price-sensitive youth. The

2014 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey found that past 30-day use of cigarettes among high school students went from 18.1 percent in 2011 to 10.6 percent, the largest drop in the history of the survey.

Adult smokers experienced a less drastic decrease, from 16.1 percent in 2010 to 14.4 percent in 2014, according to the Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey. A majority of smokers who quit in this time period cited the increased price as a motivation to quit smoking, as well.

Even though sales of cigarettes have dropped significantly, the tax generated more revenue in the 12 months following the increase.

A proposal to remove the automatic inflator is included in the house version of the tax bill when the legislative session convenes in March.

Since its adoption in 2013, opponents of the inflator have worked hard to repeal it.

The industry will continue its intense pressure to repeal the inflator in the 2016 session.

## Revenue from tobacco taxes exceeds prevention funding

The amount of revenue Minnesota brings in from tobacco taxes and lawsuit settlement fees vastly exceeds the amount the state spends to prevent tobacco addiction or help people quit smoking.

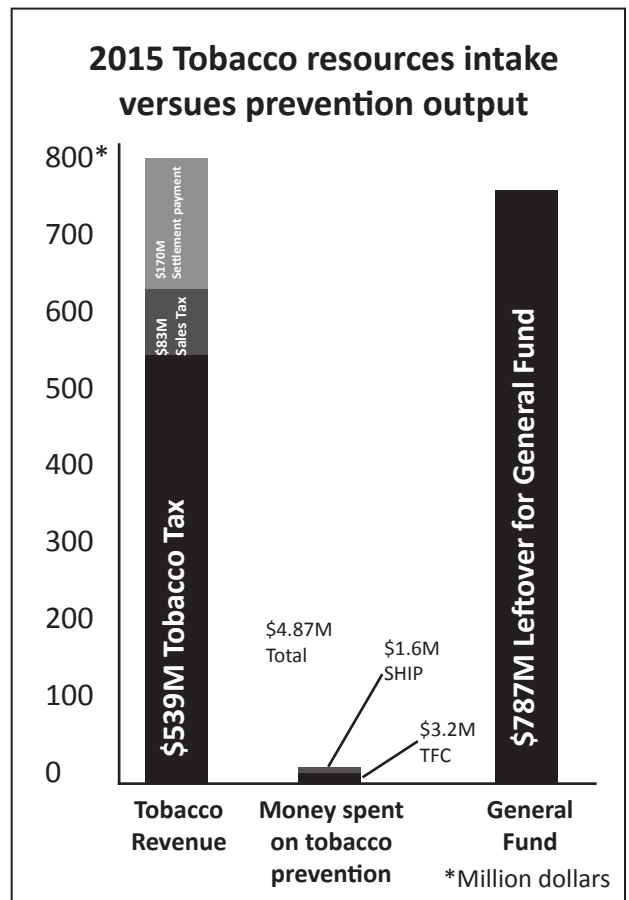
*2015 Minnesota Tobacco Revenue*  
**Tobacco tax:** \$539,045,000  
**Sales tax on tobacco products:** \$83,000,000  
**Annual payment from the tobacco lawsuit settlement:** \$170,747,000  
**Total:** \$792,792,000

*2015 Minnesota Prevention Expenditures*  
**Total state revenue dedicated to tobacco**

**prevention through the Tobacco-Free Communities program:** \$3,221,000  
**Tobacco prevention funding spent out of the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP):** \$1,653,349  
**Total state support for tobacco use prevention:** \$4,874,349

**Amount left for other purposes such as roads and bridges from tobacco revenues:** \$787,917,651.

A strong argument can and should be made that more of these funds ought to be dedicated to tobacco use prevention and other public health needs.





## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

*When the Minnesota legislature goes into session in March, public health advocates will be working hard on policies to reduce the harms of tobacco. It will be a short session with a budget surplus. Below are the issues that could come up:*

- **Repeal the tobacco tax inflator:** Minnesota's tobacco tax includes a provision for the tax to increase at the rate of inflation each January. The Department of Revenue determines the new rate. This year, the tobacco tax increased by 10 cents per pack, and the sales tax increased by 2 cents for a total 12-cent increase. The purpose of this automatic tax increase is to keep the relative cost of tobacco the same. In the past, the relative tax has decreased significantly over time because of the impact of inflation. There is pressure from the tobacco industry to repeal this tax provision. This attempt will be opposed by the public health community. Because of the current budget surplus, it will be a tough fight to hold on to this provision, labeled 'taxes on auto-pilot' by the industry.

ANSR analyzed the price of cigarettes after Minnesota increased the tobacco tax by \$1.60 in 2013. When

the tax went up, the tobacco companies took advantage of the opportunity and added a wee bit more to top off their profits. Marlboro increased the cost of its products by 14 cents on top of the tax, and Camel increased its cigarettes by 6 cents on top of the tax. Oh, and they blamed the increased cost on the increased tax.

- **Include e-cigarettes in the Freedom to Breathe act, prohibiting the use of e-cigarettes wherever cigarette smoking is prohibited.** ANSR and other health advocates have worked on this for several years. Although we are close to a winning margin in the Senate, numbers are much less promising in the House. Nearly 50 percent of the state's citizens are now covered by city or county ordinances that include e-cigarettes. The prospects for this provision passing at the state level do not appear good this session.
- **Restricting fruit and sweet flavors in OTPs:** OTPs are all the tobacco products that are not cigarettes, such as e-cigarette juice, little cigars, and chewing tobacco. The cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul recently enacted ordinances restricting these flavors, and there will be interest in doing this at the state

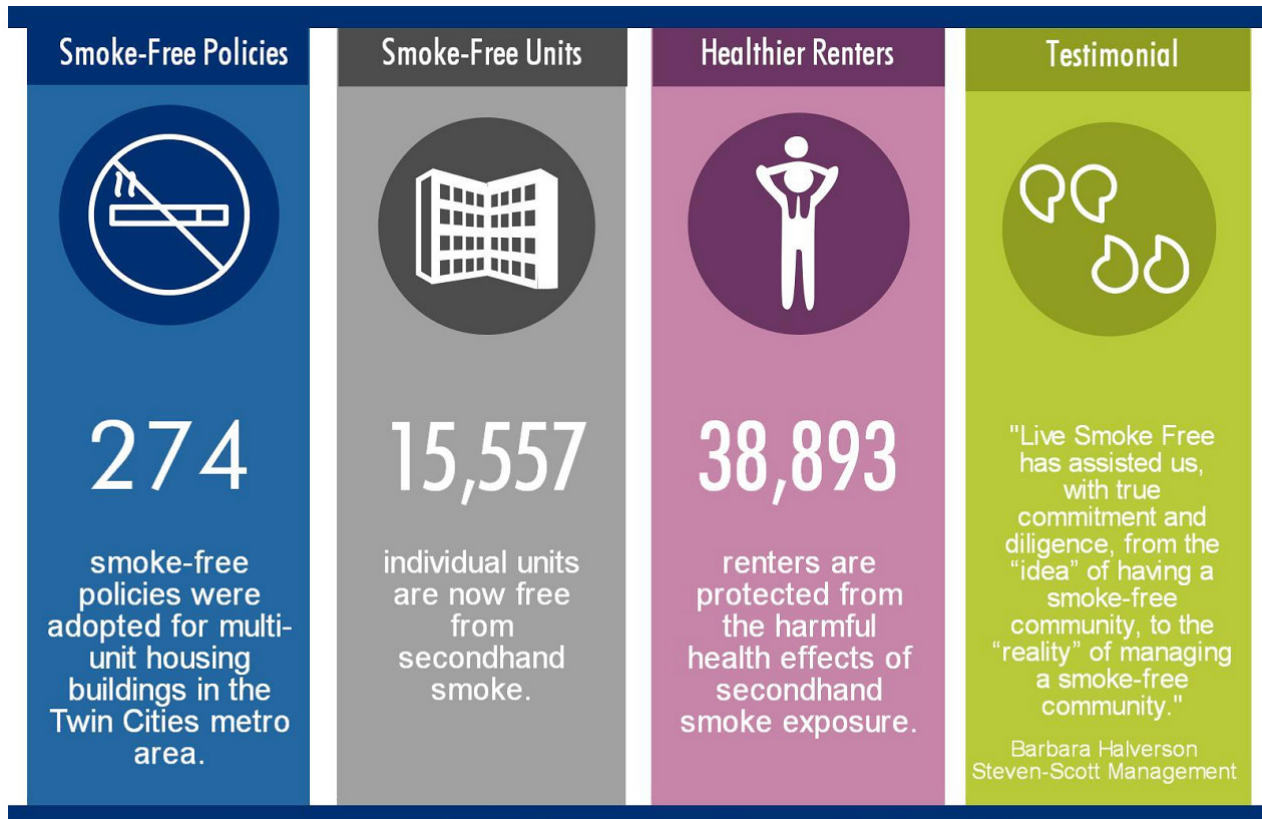
level. There will certainly be discussions with legislators, but there may not be a bill this session. Federal law prohibits sweet and fruit flavors in cigarettes.

- **Restricting menthol in cigarettes and OTPs:** Because of the high use of menthol cigarettes by youth and the targeting of the African American community by the tobacco industry, eliminating menthol from tobacco products is a public health priority. Menthol makes it easier to start smoking and harder to quit. Like the other flavoring restrictions, this topic will certainly be discussed with legislators, but there may not be a bill this session.
- **Smoke-free cars for kid:** ANSR has worked on this issue for a decade and over time, more health organizations have pledged their support. Opinion polling indicates there is strong public support for this provision. Crafting an updated bill and testing the legislative waters for support will be on this year's agenda.
- **Funding:** Funding for tobacco prevention so that prevention programs can be implemented statewide is a priority. Since this is not a budget year, that issue is not likely to be on the table although there is a budget surplus.

## GARAGE SALE JUST AROUND CORNER

The ANSR Garage & Plant sale is set for May 20-21. More details in April!

## LSF: STATEWIDE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY



The Live Smoke Free program recently completed another successful round of smoke-free housing work under the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) of the Minnesota Department of Health.

Between Jan. 1, 2014, and Oct. 31, 2015, Live Smoke Free partnered with local public health departments

to promote and implement smoke-free housing policies in the Twin Cities Metro area. As a result of this work, 274 smoke-free policies were adopted, 15,557 residential units are free from secondhand smoke, and about 38,893 Minnesota renters are protected from secondhand smoke exposure in their homes. Community outreach,

direct service to property owners and managers, and strong partnerships with the following public health departments were key components in achieving these accomplishments: Bloomington, Edina, Richfield, Carver County, Dakota County, Hennepin County, Minneapolis, Minnesota Department of Health, Ramsey County, Scott County, Wright County.

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# ANSR Bulletin

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## ROUNDUP

**GOING NATIONAL:** Two ANSR staff members, Director of Research Betsy Brock and Live Smoke Free Program Director Kara Skahen, are in the national spotlight.

Skahen participated in a national webinar sponsored by the Tobacco Control Legal Consortium on Dec. 14, 2015. The webinar provided an overview of the proposed Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) smoke-free rule, what it would potentially cover, and the process of implementing smoke-free housing policies.

Brock, along with Latrisha Vetaw of NorthPoint Wellness, will make a presentation as part of a plenary session at the National Smokeless and Spit Tobacco Conference in Albuquerque, N.M., in April.

The presentation will center on



Brock



Skahen

the Minneapolis flavoring ordinance. Brock will also present results from ANSR's tobacco surveillance project at the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco annual meeting in Chicago in March.

**COMPLIANCE RESULTS:** In 2015, the North Suburban Tobacco Compliance Check Program's compliance rate was 88.5 percent, compared to 93.5 percent in 2014 and 95 percent in 2013.

ANSR staff conducted two vendor trainings in 2015. Program

Director Katie Engman is available to do additional future trainings.

Nine new students were trained and are ready to participate in the program, for a total of 23 students who are trained and ready to assist with tobacco compliance checks in suburban Ramsey County.

Participation in the project requires a minimum of two rounds of unannounced tobacco compliance checks per year in each city.

Engman encourages additional checks if a vendor fails a check.

Certificates are sent to vendors in participating cities who pass each tobacco compliance check

**GTMD:** Give to the Max Day was an amazing event, and it was all thanks to you! ANSR raised \$7,805 on Give to the Max Day. Thank you for your continued support!