

THE IMPACT OF SMOKING ON ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

The Tobacco Tax Act of 2006 achieves two goals: it will reduce smoking, especially among kids, and fund critical healthcare priorities such as disease prevention, medical research, children's health insurance and emergency room care. Among California's ethnic communities, the problem of smoking is particularly alarming, consider:

- 1 in 5 African Americans are smokers.¹ Nearly 1 in 7 Latinos are smokers.²
- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among Latinos living in the United States.³
- Each year, approximately 45,000 African Americans die from a smoking-related disease that could have been prevented.¹
- If current patterns continue, an estimated 1.6 million African Americans who are now under the age of 18 will become regular smokers. About 500,000 of those smokers will die of a smoking-related disease.¹
- African Americans continue to suffer disproportionately from chronic and preventable disease compared to white Americans. Of the three leading causes of death in African Americans—heart disease, cancer and stroke—smoking and other tobacco use are major contributors to these illnesses.⁴

The Tobacco Tax Act of 2006 is supported by a broad coalition, including the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, and the American Lung Association. They are sponsoring this initiative because it will help keep kids from starting to smoke. The tobacco companies oppose this measure for the same reason. Tobacco companies know that 90% of smokers start as teens.

The initiative puts in place strict safeguards and audits to ensure that funds go exactly where voters intend. Legislators will not be able to raid the trust funds.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Cigarette Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2004*.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Cigarette Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2004*

³ The National Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco Prevention— *Quick Facts*: <http://www.nlcatp.org/index.cfm>.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Chronic Disease in Minority Populations (1994)*: 2-16.