

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CIGARETTE TAX MOVES TO SENATE FLOOR

(Columbia, SC) The good news is the South Carolina Senate will have an opportunity to debate a fifty cent cigarette tax increase next week. The bad news is that H. 3584 passed out of the Senate Finance Committee with changes to revenue disbursement that removed funding for tobacco prevention programs.

"We are very grateful to Chairman Leatherman and Senator Alexander and members of the Finance Committee for their leadership in arriving at a compromise that would allow the cigarette tax to move forward," said Nancy Cheney of the American Cancer Society. "They are true champions for South Carolina."

"We are thrilled that the bill has passed out of the Finance Committee. We do expect some challenges on the Senate floor, but have faith that the Senators see the value in the tax increase. The CDC reports that every pack of cigarettes sold costs each citizen about \$7.00 in healthcare costs and productivity. The preventive effect of this measure gets us that much closer to reducing the size of that problem." said Jim Bowie, Executive Director of the SC Tobacco Collaborative.

"Losing funds for a state tobacco prevention program is a disappointment" said June Deen, spokesperson for the American Lung Association. "Currently, South Carolina ranks at the bottom for state funded efforts to help people quit smoking and preventing kids from starting smoking." "We will be working to recover these funds as the legislation moves forward."

"Increasing the cigarette tax will reduce smoking, particularly among kids," said Yarley Steedly with the American Heart Association. "Tobacco prevention programs can help more people quit and keep more kids from starting to smoke".

The legislation, sponsored by House Speaker Bobby Harrell, passed the House by a vote of 97-22 in early April. The South Carolina Tobacco Collaborative is pushing to have the bill debated on the Senate Floor next week.

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