



Media Advisory

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Tobacco tax increase would save lives, bring much-needed revenue to Illinois

**** Interviews available in Chicago, Springfield ****

WHAT: At noon today, the Senate Executive Committee will host a hearing on SB21, which includes an amendment that would increase the tax on tobacco products by \$.50 per pack in 2011, and an additional \$0.50 in 2012. This policy will raise hundreds of millions of dollars while saving thousands of lives and discouraging an estimated 100,000 young people in Illinois from smoking. One of the most effective means to get people to quit the deadly habit of smoking and prevent smoking among future generations is to raise cigarette taxes. The state will save an estimated \$2 billion in long-term health savings from the decreased smoking rates.

WHO: Joel Africk, President and Chief Executive Officer (in *Chicago*)
Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago

Matt Maloney, Director of Health Policy (in *Springfield*)
Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago

STATEMENT:

"The annual toll of tobacco in Illinois is a staggering \$4.2 billion in health care costs. This legislation would bring \$300 million per year to Illinois. But the impact of this policy goes beyond economics; it's about saving lives. Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death. It's time to address this issue with proactive public health policy that will save lives and ensure that more grandparents are around to see their children graduate, more dads can walk their daughters down the aisle, and more kids can avoid getting hooked on tobacco."

- Joel Africk, President and Chief Executive Officer, RHAMC

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Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago has been a local public health leader since 1906. Today, the association addresses asthma, COPD, lung cancer, tobacco control and air quality with a comprehensive approach involving research, education and advocacy activities. For more information, visit www.lungchicago.org.