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## NEVADANS SHOW STRONG BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASE

*New poll suggests Nevada voters are ready to support a health impact fee on tobacco products*

**Las Vegas, Nev.**—January 27, 2011—A strong majority of Nevada voters would support a substantial increase on taxes of tobacco products, with 74 percent overall saying they are in favor of increasing the state tobacco tax to help solve Nevada’s budget deficit and fund important state priorities.

The results are part of a new poll released today by American Lung Association in Nevada (ALAN) in conjunction with the Health Investment Partnership (HIP), a statewide coalition of nonprofit organizations, public health groups, government agencies and tobacco control advocates. The group supports introducing a health impact fee on tobacco products to help address Nevada’s budget deficit, reduce healthcare costs and save lives by helping people to quit. The poll, which surveyed more than 800 registered Nevada voters, is the largest conducted on this topic in state history.

HIP members say the poll indicates universal support for implementing a health impact fee on tobacco products and sends a strong message to both Nevada legislators and Governor Sandoval that voters are ready to support elected officials who not only address Nevada’s budget crisis but save lives in the process.

“Nevadans of all ages and every political affiliation have made it clear that supporting a health impact fee on tobacco products is not a political liability, but rather a vote for the will of the people,” says Amy Beaulieu, director of tobacco control policy for ALAN and a member of the Health Investment

Partnership. “We are calling on our leaders to enact landmark legislation that will create sustainable revenue for our state and significantly improve the health and well-being of all Nevadans.”

HIP is proposing a \$1.20 health impact fee on cigarette packs and an equitable rate on other tobacco products, which, if enacted, are estimated to generate nearly \$85 million in revenues for the state during the first year alone and approximately \$315 million over five years. What’s more, the proposed health impact fee would not only generate *new* revenue for the state but also *save* Nevada taxpayers millions of dollars over the long term in healthcare costs related to tobacco use.

Currently, Nevada spends \$565 million on tobacco-related healthcare costs, \$123 million of which is paid by the state through Medicaid. A study released last month by renowned economic analyst Dr. Frank Chaloupka, distinguished professor of economics at University of Illinois at Chicago, estimated that a decline of just one percentage point in adult smoking rates (which typically occurs after an increase in tobacco taxes) will save the state \$186 million in healthcare costs, including \$22.3 million in state Medicaid costs over time.

“Numerous studies tell us that Nevada is lagging far behind the rest of the country when it comes to meaningful tobacco control policies,” Beaulieu says. “And we now know that imposing a health impact fee—one of the most effective tobacco control policies available—is not a partisan issue. It’s time to change course and position Nevada as a leader on this issue.”

The poll also indicates that Nevada voters would much rather see a tobacco tax increase, such as a health impact fee, than an increase on the state’s mining or gaming industry. Additionally, when it comes to methods to balance the state’s budget, Nevadans also overwhelmingly prefer a tobacco tax increase over reductions in education and health care programs (including Medicaid funding) or the implementation of a personal income tax.

Other notable highlights from the poll include the following:

- **81 percent** of voters are in favor of taxing other tobacco products (cigars, smokeless tobacco) at a rate comparable to cigarettes.
- **57 percent** of voters are likely to support a political candidate who votes for a tobacco tax increase. Just **18 percent** are less likely to.

- **71 percent** of voters favor a \$1.20 per pack increase in the tobacco tax.
- The poll showed solid support for a tobacco tax increase across party lines, with **77 percent** of Democrats and **69 percent** of Republicans indicating support. In addition, **69 percent** of respondents who self-identified with the tea party movement indicated support.

“This poll provides the most convincing evidence to date that the time is right to impose a health impact fee on tobacco products,” said Christopher Roller, director of advocacy for the American Heart Association. “Legislators have an opportunity this session to help resolve our state’s financial crisis, improve overall public health, and save Nevada taxpayers money in the process. It’s a win-win proposal.”

The survey was conducted by F-M Three, a public opinion research company. The statewide poll has a random sample of 802 registered Nevada voters and was conducted January 15-17, 2011.

### **About the Health Investment Partnership**

*Health Investment Partnership is a statewide coalition of public health organizations, health care agencies, nonprofit organizations and tobacco control advocates who support introducing a health impact fee on cigarettes and other tobacco products to help reduce Nevada’s budget deficit and save lives. The campaign is comprised of health organizations including the American Lung Association in Nevada, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Nevada Cancer Institute, March of Dimes, and the Nevada State Medical Association.*

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Editor’s note: The full poll results are accessible at [www.tobaccofreenv.org](http://www.tobaccofreenv.org)