

Smoking cessation (tobacco legislation)

Law



The Honorable FILL IN THE BLANK FILL IN THE BLANK Topic: Support of S. 3081 – Tobacco Tax Equity Act July 24, The purpose of this memo is to strongly urge your support of S. 3081: Tobacco Tax Equity Act of 2012. For decades, the Congress has worked to regulate, tax, and further define the legalities of how tobacco companies can market, operate, and display their goods to the consumer. However, one factor that has not been taken into consideration is the tax parity of tobacco products. For instance, an individual does not pay the same percentage of tobacco tax across the board on all tobacco products. They are taxed at different levels; i. e. smokeless tobacco is taxed differently than pipe tobacco which is in turn taxed at a different rate than roll-your-own tobacco or cigars.

The reason this is of utmost importance is that this seemingly small loophole in tax law creates a disparity in the market and encourages more and more people each year, for monetary reasons alone, to begin using another form of tobacco product than the traditional cigarette. The common misconception in this is that anything is safer than a cigarette; whether that be chewing tobacco or cigars. This however could not be further from the truth. All tobacco products kill; the only difference therein is the type of cancer or disease they are most likely to cause.

According to the Center for Disease Control, smokeless tobacco alone is responsible for the following – just to name a few:

Smokeless tobacco is a known cause of human cancer; it increases the risk of developing cancer of the oral cavity.

Smokeless tobacco is also strongly associated with leukoplakia—a precancerous lesion of the soft tissue in the mouth that consists of a white patch or plaque that cannot be scraped off.

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Smokeless tobacco is associated with recession of the gums, gum disease, and tooth decay.

Smokeless tobacco use during pregnancy increases the risks for preeclampsia (i. e., a condition that may include high blood pressure, fluid retention, and swelling), premature birth, and low birth weight.

Smokeless tobacco use by men causes reduced sperm count and abnormal sperm cells.

Smokeless tobacco use can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence.

Adolescents who use smokeless tobacco are more likely to become cigarette smokers.

Furthermore, sales of smokeless tobacco products continue to rise within the United States (FTC 2009). This rise is in no small part to the cheap availability of these other forms of tobacco in the current market. This growing popularity is especially alarming when understood against the backdrop of the growing popularity of smokeless tobacco products among middle and high school students in the United States (CDC 2010). According to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, “ smokeless, or spit, tobacco has gone from a product used primarily by older men to one used predominantly by young men and boys. This trend has occurred as smokeless tobacco promotions have increased dramatically and a new generation of smokeless tobacco products has hit the market” (Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, 2009). By leveling tax parity among all tobacco products, some of the allure of cheap smokeless alternatives is reduced. A secondary good from such an increase is that the further tax revenues that will be gleaned can be distributed among a host of current government programs intended on further tobacco education and health care funding for what remains the most

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preventable form of death in the United States (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2010).

As the use of tobacco products among the older demographic in the United States is relatively constant, it continues to grow among the nation's youth. It is against this backdrop, as well as the multiplicity of health affects that smokeless and other tobacco products wreak on our nation that has prompted this letter. Please strongly consider taking action to stem the tide of cheap and readily available tobacco products in our nation and to our youth.

Thank you for your time and your concern in this matter,

Sincerely,

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