

Cigarette tax supporters rally at capitol

by Jackie Johnson, reporter for the Learfield Communications

Thousands of people rally at the state capitol, showing their support for a higher cigarette tax. Marian Sheridan, co-chair of the Tobacco Control Advisory Board, says a \$1.00 cigarette tax increase is a win-win situation. She says it will significantly reduce smoking, reduce Medicaid costs, and provide funding for tobacco control programs and for Medicaid. "Isn't improving the health of our children worth \$1.00?"

State Senator Fred Risser (D-Madison) lets everyone know he supports a bigger cigarette tax. "They say it's hard to find the money to meet the needs of SeniorCare, Medicare, but we know how to find the money, don't we? The cigarette tax, right?! Yay. One dollar cigarette tax."

The Madison Democrat says the dollar increase will help prevent people from starting to smoke, it'll support cessation programs, and healthcare. "That'll raise all the money they need for Medicare. That'll raise all the money they need for SeniorCare. That'll raise the money they need for long-term healthcare and for the needs of the disabled."

Sheridan says tobacco control is not a partisan issue. She says hiking up the tax will prevent more people from smoking. "The single most effective strategy to reduce tobacco consumption is raising the price of the product."

Risser says one of the purposes of government is to help disabled people and the elderly, and with his position as a Senator, he says he can help 'from the inside'.

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