

Testimony in Opposition of HB HB2306
Increasing rates of taxation on cigarettes, tobacco products and alcoholic beverages.
House Tax Committee
Thursday, February 19, 2015
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Chairman Kleeb and members of the Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in Opposition to House Bill HB2306. I view this bill as an unfair way to fix budget problems by applying steep taxes to a minority of taxpayers.

As a registered republican voter, a smoker and a small business owner I must say the taxing just the smokers, drinkers and those that use smokeless tobacco, is no way to fix the financial crisis that is facing our state. The way to fix the problem is to go back to the form of taxation that was in place before the current form was put into place. I've talked to quite a few farmers, ranchers and small business owners who have told me that this new tax-less system that the state levied last year hasn't reduced taxes, but eliminated them altogether. I'm not a fan of taxes, but our old way of generating revenue for the state worked.

Don't try to fix the budget hole by taxing smokers. The first bill that President Obama signed into law after he was elected was a huge federal tax on tobacco users to pay for a government health program. We pay enough. In the past few years state and local governments have passed bans, which prohibit property owners from smoking in their own business. We have been pushed outside of our own business and our neighborhood bars, to the heat, the cold, the rain and the snow to consume a legal product that we already pay taxes on. We pay enough.

If we must raise taxes, why don't you find a product that no one thinks about but everyone consumes. For instance, toilet paper. If the state government added a nickel or a dime tax a roll to every roll sold in the state, that would pass the tax burden evenly across the tax base. The key point is fairness.

I also wonder about out of state purchases and the black market. If you pass additional taxes on cigarettes, how are you going to make the states that surround Kansas, pass similar taxes? What is going to stop the majority of smokers in the state, which incidentally live within 40 miles of a state line, from buying their tobacco products from out of state? If that happens, how will it affect this revenue scheme?

And when we get down to it, I thought that the Republican majority in the both the Kansas House and the Kansas senate, was about lowering taxes, not about raising them just like President Obama.

I want to thank Chairman Kleeb and members of the committee, for this opportunity to testify in Opposition of House Bill HB2306.

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