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Voters Support New Rules on Tobacco Product Placement and Equal Taxation

Recent poll shows overwhelming public support for closing tobacco loopholes in Wisconsin

Madison, Wis. – A recent poll found strong, bi-partisan, statewide support for proposals to move all tobacco products behind the counter, close tax loopholes that allow some tobacco products to be taxed less than others and continue funding the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program to keep tobacco out of our kids’ hands.

Tobacco is the number one cause of preventable death in Wisconsin and 80 percent of those addicted to tobacco begin using it before the age of 18. Recently, the tobacco industry has developed more ways to target youth by disguising their newest products to look and smell like kids favorite candies, mints and gum. Currently, there is no state law that requires these other tobacco products be sold behind the counter. Furthermore, these products are cheaper and are taxed less than cigarettes, making them more appealing and accessible to kids.

In early May, a coalition of public health groups commissioned Public Opinion Strategies to conduct a poll on tobacco issues. The poll, which surveyed 500 likely Wisconsin voters, found three out of four respondents were concerned about tobacco use among youth and supported the Joint Finance Committee’s recent decision to maintain funding for the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. In addition, pollsters found nearly eight in ten voters favor a behind-the-counter proposal for candy flavored tobacco and 71 percent want to close the tobacco tax loophole and tax all tobacco products at the same rate as cigarettes.

The poll illustrates strong public support for the ongoing efforts of the Tobacco Prevention and Control program and for legislative action to close tobacco loopholes that target kids and jeopardize the health of Wisconsin and its citizens.

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