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Western States Affiliate

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Hand-Delivered. Original Mailed 3/6/03.

Assemblyman David Parks
Chair, Assembly Taxation Committee
401 S. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Chairman Parks and Members of the Committee:

The toll on Nevada's public health from tobacco earns us the unenviable moniker "the smokiest state in the nation." Tobacco kills 3,100 Nevadans each year—a fact that I, as a Nevadan, am personally ashamed of. The price on our State's budget, however, is equally tragic, with \$440 million in annual costs to the State of Nevada for smoking-related healthcare costs.

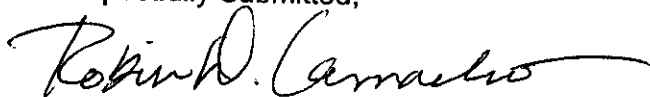
The American Heart Association supports an increase in the excise tax on cigarettes by at least \$.70 per pack. Increasing excise taxes will reduce the number of Nevadans who smoke, raise much-needed revenue, and save the State of Nevada millions of dollars in healthcare costs. In addition, lives will be saved—*some of those the price-sensitive kids who would die prematurely from heart disease or cancer were they to take up smoking or continue to smoke.*

I am enclosing a booklet detailing our recent poll which shows that voters express strong support for cigarette excise tax increases. In fact, support for an increase of \$1 per pack mirrors support for lesser increases.

Our poll also shows that 62.1 percent of Nevadans surveyed feel that at least 25 percent of revenues from this excise tax increase should be used to fund programs that help kids quit smoking, or prevent kids from starting to smoke. The American Heart Association urges you to earmark 20 to 25 percent of the revenue from a cigarette excise tax increase for programs to help reduce tobacco's toll on our state's youth. Regardless which bill is finally passed, earmarking funding for youth cessation and prevention programs will pay off in huge dividends to the State and to Nevadans.

If there is anything I can do to be of service, please feel free to call me in my office, 702.367.1366, or on my cell phone, 702.561.7506.

Respectfully Submitted,



Robin D. Camacho
Director of Advocacy and Communications