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CA LEGISLATURE PASSES HISTORIC SMOKING PREVENTION BILLS TO SAVE LIVES AND MONEY

- **Measures would raise smoking age to 21; regulate e-cigarettes; encourage smoke-free schools and workplaces; allow for counties to put tobacco taxes up for local votes.**
- **Measures would reduce smoking, save lives, and help save money for health system, including Medi-Cal. First-in-a-generation vote brings momentum for tobacco tax effort this fall, which would help reimburse Medi-Cal for the cost of tobacco-related diseases.**

SACRAMENTO, CA--Today, the California Senate passed a package of historic tobacco control bills that will improve the health of our state by reducing the harmful and devastating effects of smoking, and save money for our health system. This follows a vote by the Assembly last week. The bills are now headed to Governor Brown's desk for signature.

"This historic legislative action not only prevent smoking and save lives but help improve the health system on which we all rely. Reducing smoking not only leads to a healthier California, but helps reduce the burden and costs of tobacco-related diseases for consumers and taxpayers," said Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California, the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition. "We all have a stake in reducing smoking, and we urge the Governor to sign these measures into law, to save lives and money."

In November, California voters will be able to weigh-in on an initiative that will raise California's cigarette tax by \$2 a pack and protect a new generation from addiction by including e-cigarettes containing tobacco in the state's tobacco tax. California's tax has not been raised since 1998 and ranks in the bottom third of U.S. states. Tobacco taxes work because it does not impact those who do not smoke and reduces the rates of new and young users. Research shows that for every 10% increase in the cost of a pack of cigarettes, teen smoking drops by up to 6.5%.

"With the momentum from this legislative action, voters can take the next step by approving a tobacco tax on the ballot this fall. By updating our tobacco tax on the ballot,

California can recoup the cost to the state's Medi-Cal program of tobacco-related diseases – and use that money to improve the program and access to care, benefiting the health system on which we all rely," said Wright. "We know that increasing the price of tobacco decreases the number of those who use it, especially among price-sensitive populations, like young people. The revenues raised by the tax will help strengthen the health care safety-net and California's health system as a whole," continued Wright.

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