

COLORADO VOTERS AMEND STATE CONSTITUTION TO FUND CHRONIC DISEASE PROGRAMS

Tobacco taxes support prevention and treatment of chronic diseases such as cancer and stroke

Public Health Problem

- Chronic diseases account for more than eighty percent of Colorado deaths each year and these deaths are projected to increase sharply as the state's population ages.
- Chronic disease prevention and control programs save lives, limit disability, and ease the economic burden on the health care system.
- Colorado state budget shortfalls have, in the past, negatively impacted public health capacity to implement, sustain, or enhance chronic disease prevention and control.

Program

- Chronic disease and health promotion program staff in the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, worked with partners to produce strategic action plans that could guide the use of increased funding for prevention, screening and treatment services to reduce the chronic disease burden in Colorado.
- Under the banner of "Citizens for a Healthier Colorado," voluntary health organizations, tobacco control advocacy organizations and statewide chronic disease coalitions advocated for an increase in tobacco excise taxes that would allocate revenue to chronic disease programming.
- Colorado voters approved Amendment 35, a citizens' initiative that added a section called "Tobacco Taxes for Health Related Purposes" to the state constitution.

Impact

- Significant improvement in funding for chronic disease programs:
 - About \$25 million was distributed through the Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease and Pulmonary Disease Competitive Grants Program to support statewide and local efforts to prevent, detect, and treat cancer, heart disease, stroke, asthma, tobacco use, and obesity.
 - An additional \$60 million was distributed to local health agencies and nonprofit organizations for tobacco use prevention and cessation, for eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke, and for reducing health disparities resulting from tobacco use.
- Enhanced integration of state chronic disease programs:
 - Chronic disease and health promotion program managers serve on the Amendment 35 Review Committees and staff from these programs work together to provide technical assistance to Amendment 35 grantees. A new chronic disease deputy director will facilitate a planned integration process among chronic disease and health promotion programs to reduce duplication and facilitate more effective programming.

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