

GILCHRIST COUNTY TOBACCO PREVENTION NEWSLETTER

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Gilchrist County SWAT Clubs Celebrate The Great American Smoke Out

Trenton's first annual Great American Smoke Out Festival was held on Friday, November 19th at the train depot. The event was the result of a project planned by the Gilchrist Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) Advisory Board. SWAT Advisory Board members Chandler Ash and Spencer Hewitt have been planning the festival for months. SWAT members partnered with the Gilchrist County Tobacco Free Partnership, Gilchrist County 4-H and the Senior Food Pantry to put on the event for the community.

According to SWAT member Chandler Ash, "We wanted to hold the event downtown to have a good turn out to help more people quit smoking." The event did just that, as several community members decided to make November 19th their quit date by signing up for cessation classes offered by Suwannee River Area Health Education Center (SRAHEC) at the Palms Medical Group in Trenton. Tobacco Cessation Specialist, Manette

Cheshareck, of SRAHEC was on hand to provide community members with cessation information and carbon monoxide testing for smokers.

SWAT members from Bell and Trenton joined together to provide games for kids and educate people in the community about tobacco issues. The SWAT booth included information about candy flavored tobacco that is attractive to youth, and information about the 4,000 deadly chemicals found in tobacco products that are harmful to health. One community member who visited the SWAT booth commented, "These kids really know what they are talking about. I had no idea that some tobacco looks just like candy." SWAT youth also promoted Tobacco Free Florida and many area children left the festival wearing Tobacco Free Florida stickers and bracelets. "Part of the reason for higher levels of tobacco use in Gilchrist County than other parts of Florida is because it is seen as more socially acceptable," said Tobacco Prevention

Specialist, Tracy DeCubellis. "When children hear the message from middle and high school students that being tobacco free is cool, it makes an impact. Adult tobacco users appreciate the message as well because they don't want to see their children and grandchildren pick up the habit. Here's a group of SWAT youth who put on a festival for the community just to let people know they can have a better life without tobacco—this has a big influence on social norms regarding tobacco use," DeCubellis said.

SWAT members were pleased with the turn-out of 100+ community members. "I am glad to see that my SWAT club's idea has gone so far and the event went so well," said SWAT member Chandler Ash. Gilchrist SWAT plans to continue outreach to the community during 2011. Bell and Trenton SWAT clubs are already planning for their next event in March, Kick Butts Day, which will be held during the Suwannee River Youth Fair in Fanning Springs.



To Be Smoke-Free or Not to Be: The Case for Expanding Smoke-Free Policies

By Thomas J. Harrington, Policy Manager, Tobacco Free Partnership of Dixie County

Many people may not think that just a little exposure to second-hand smoke is dangerous but, according to the 2006 Surgeon General's report, there is absolutely NO risk-free level of exposure!

Second-hand smoke is actually classified as a Group A carcinogen meaning that no safe level of exposure exists as this type of carcinogen is known to cause cancer in people. Furthermore, second-hand smoke exposure can contribute to a variety of complications to the chest, lungs, throat, and most recently as a new study suggests, actual hearing

loss can occur as well. For those with asthma, second-hand smoke actually will trigger negative reactions.

Not only is second-hand smoke an issue but researchers now show evidence that *third-hand smoke*, leftover smoke residue, exists in rooms and places that have been exposed to smoking. The residue remains on carpets, walls, furniture, and any items that are essentially around when smoking takes place. This is particularly alarming for those with infants and children since young people are more susceptible to such toxins as their

“Approximately 60 percent of nonsmokers in the United States have biologic evidence of exposure to second-hand smoke. Yet compared with data reviewed in the 1986 report, I am encouraged by the progress that has been made in reducing involuntary exposure in many workplaces, restaurants, and other public places.”

Richard Carmona, MD, MPH, US Surgeon General, 2006

respiratory and immune systems are still developing. A very recent TIME article suggests that the residue cigarette smoke left behind may be just as unhealthy as direct second-hand smoke exposure.

In addition to the consequences of smoking inside, smoke from right outside may creep indoors through window and door cracks and can be a problem in multi-unit dwelling places. Also, if smoking takes place in a unit next door and there is a shared ventilation system, the ventilation system is not effective at removing toxins, negatively impacting the other unit as well. This can certainly get expensive for property owners to clean as costs can be as high as \$3,500 per unit if there needs to be new carpeting and painting. Even with ventilation system clean-ups, the problem could very well persist unless a smoke-free policy is put into effect by management.

Typically, a safe distance away from exposure to second-hand smoke is between the distances of at least 20-25 feet. Nursing home and other health facilities have considered implementing this rule for people who want to smoke on their property but to keep out seepage of smoke through doorways and cracks. A voluntary rule of this nature allows everybody, especially the elderly, infirm, and young to pass through entranceways without being exposed to second-hand smoke. It also helps to change the social norms for the community at-large as has been done at places such as UF

Shands Hospital which over a year ago went completely tobacco-free.

These issues hit closest to home when the latest Florida Youth Tobacco Survey from Gilchrist County showed that youth's exposure to second-hand smoke is significantly higher in the county than the rest of the state. Compared with the state's average of those middle and high school youth who live in homes where smoking is allowed inside, there are about TWICE as many youth in Gilchrist County who live in homes that permit smoking inside. Parents can do far more to reduce the harmful side effects of second-hand smoke by volunteering to not smoke inside and around their youth, even in cars and other places where youth could be exposed. Nearly two-thirds of the same youth surveyed said they had been exposed to smoke in the last 7 days, a number that reflects a real dire need for adult parental leadership to help contain the dangerous particles that are emitted in the air from smoking around youth.

Most of us know a loved one who has sadly been impacted by tobacco's harm somehow. The benefit of reducing second-hand and third-hand smoke exposure is that our loved ones will no longer be exposed to deadly carcinogens that cause cancer and other ailments. Health and property costs will also be reduced and our youth can breathe cleaner air which will lead to a much healthier and happier community.



Results of the 2010 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey Reveal Progress in Gilchrist County

By Barry Hummel, Jr., MD, Quit Doc Research and Education Foundation

The results of the 2010 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS) were released in November, 2010, and those results reveal the success of tobacco prevention efforts in Gilchrist County, Florida over the last two years.

The FYTS has been conducted annually since 2000 to monitor trends in youth tobacco use throughout the State of Florida. During every-other-odd-year, statewide data is collected; during every-other-even-year, the FYTS is expanded to collect county-specific data. This allows for analysis of local trends, as well as comparisons among the counties to identify specific successes or problem areas.

The 2010 results are particularly important in Gilchrist County. Prior to the 2008 FYTS, there had been no specific funding for tobacco prevention programs in Gilchrist County since 2003. The 2010 FYTS results reflect the return

of funding for such programs beginning in the spring of 2008.

Unfortunately, the middle schools in Gilchrist County did not participate in the 2008 survey, making it difficult to compare differences in those two-year trends.

Figure 1 shows results from the 2008 and 2010 FYTS for use of all form of tobacco by Gilchrist County Youth. In 2008, prior to funding for tobacco prevention efforts, Gilchrist County high school students fell behind the state averages. For example, there was a 6.3% decrease in all forms of tobacco use among Florida High School Students; during the same time period, there was a 19.9% increase in tobacco use among Gilchrist County high school students.

Once the funding for prevention programs was restored in Gilchrist County, this trend was reversed. While there was a mere 0.9% drop in tobacco

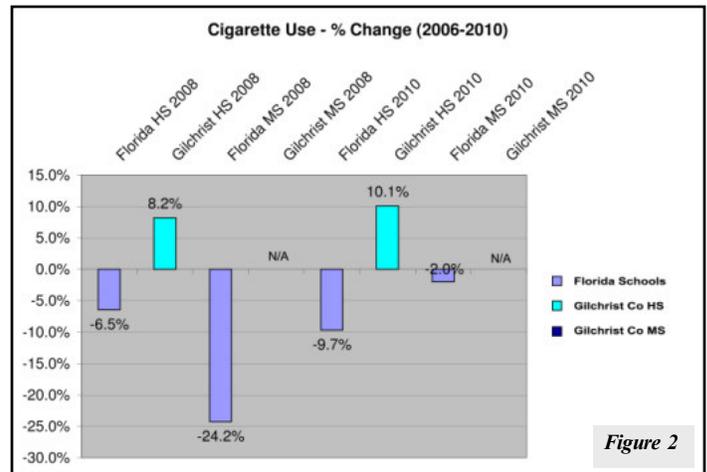


Figure 2

use reported statewide among Florida High School Students from 2008 to 2010, Gilchrist County saw a 16.1% drop in high school tobacco use over the same time frame.

Again, similar comparisons cannot be made for Gilchrist County middle school youth. However, in 2006, 22.5% of middle school students reported using any form of to-

bacco; by 2010, that number had dropped to 13.1%, an overall reduction of 41.7%!

These trends were also demonstrated when separating out the different types of tobacco. **During the two years of renewed funding there were decreases in cigar and smokeless tobacco use among Gilchrist County high school students that exceeded the state average over the same period of time.** Oddly, during the same time period Gilchrist County high school students actually reported increased use of cigarettes.

Figure 2 shows the comparison between 2008 (pre-funding) and 2010 (renewed funding) for cigarette use among Gilchrist County students. In 2008, high school students reported an 8.2% increase in cigarette use compared to a 6.35% drop statewide. In 2010, the results were very similar; Gilchrist County high school students reported a 10.1% increase in cigarette use, compared to a 9.7% drop statewide. There is no local data to account for this increase.

Again, because of the lack of data for Gilchrist County middle school youth in 2008,

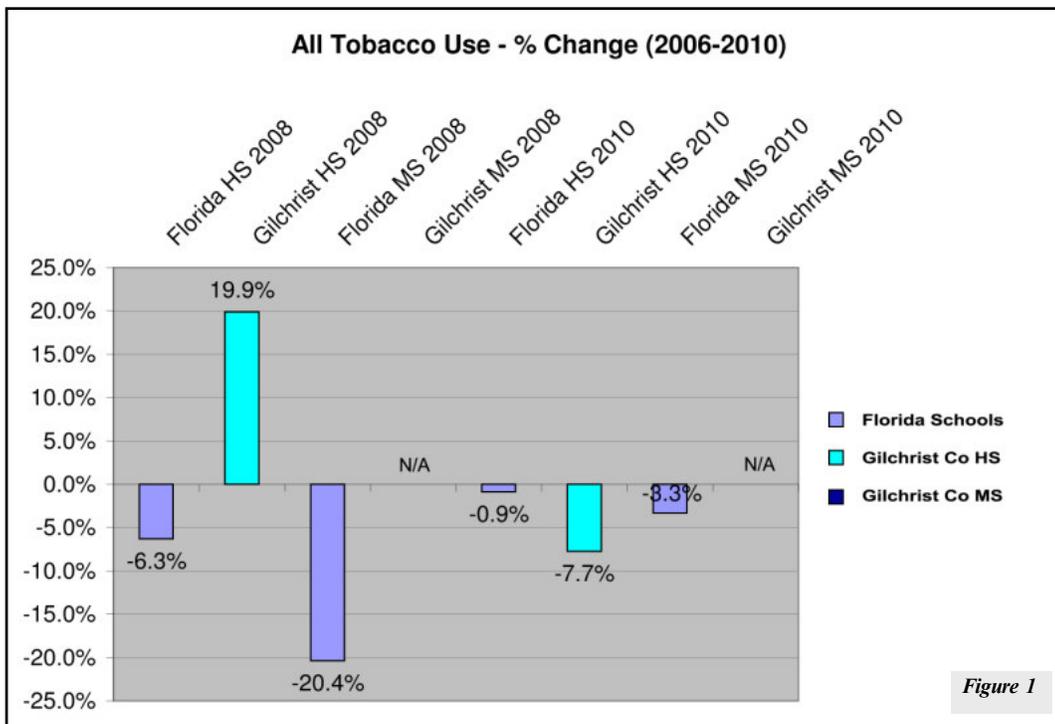


Figure 1

Florida Youth Tobacco Survey, *continued*

we can only look at the change over the entire four years. In 2006, 12.9% of Gilchrist County middle school students reported using cigarettes; by 2010, just 7.7% of Gilchrist County middle school students used cigarettes. **This represents an overall decrease in cigarette use between 2006 and 2010 among Gilchrist County middle school youth from of 40.3%!**

Figure 3 shows the comparison for cigar use among Gilchrist County Students. As with cigarettes, the 2008 data reveals a dramatic increase in cigar use among Gilchrist County high school students. However, in contrast to cigarette use, the 2010 data reveals that Gilchrist County high school students reported a 2.7 decrease in cigar use compared to a 7.4% increase statewide over the same time period.

Again, because of the lack of data for Gilchrist County middle school youth in 2008, we can only look at the change in cigar use over the entire four years. In 2006, 5.9% of Gilchrist County middle school students reported using cigars; by 2010, just 2.3% of Gilchrist County middle school students used cigars. **This represents an overall decrease in cigar use between 2006 and 2010 among Gilchrist County middle school youth from of 61%!**

Finally, Figure 4 reveals the comparison for smokeless tobacco use. This data is becoming increasingly important because of a recent push by major tobacco companies to move into the smokeless market with new products such as snus. The 2008 data showed a 32.3% increase in smokeless use among Gilchrist County high school students; during the same time period, there was no change in smokeless tobacco use among high school students statewide. In stark contrast, **the 2010 data reveals that Gil-**

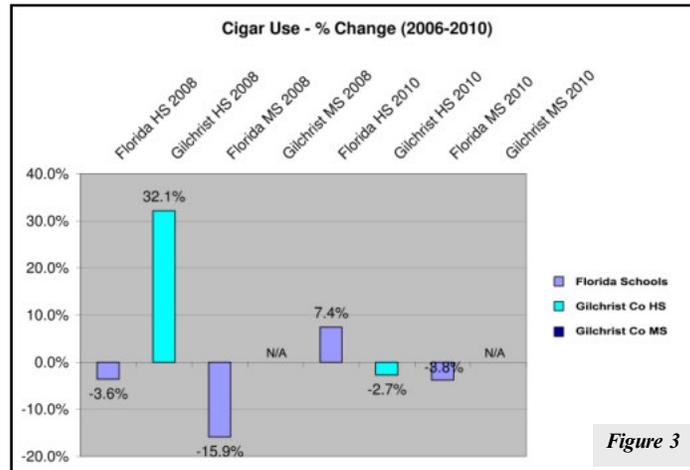


Figure 3

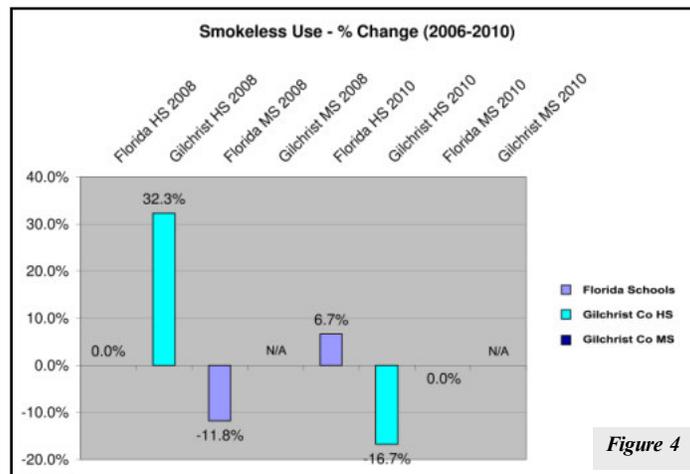


Figure 4

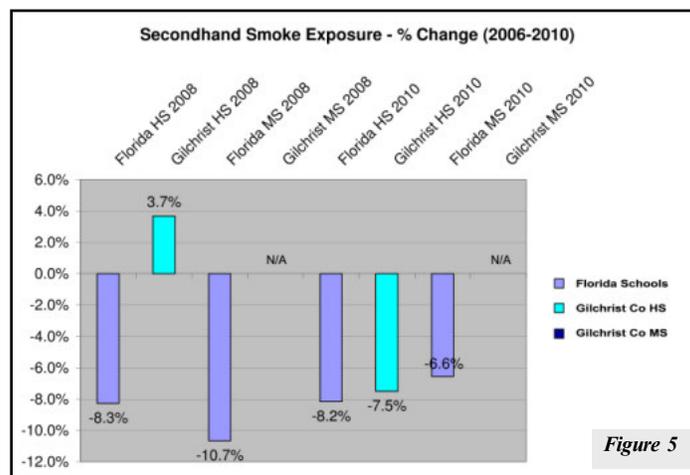


Figure 5

christ County high school reduced their use of smokeless tobacco use by 16.7%, compared to a 6.7% increase in smokeless tobacco use among all Florida high school students!

In 2006, 12.8% of Gilchrist County middle school students reported using smokeless tobacco. This had fallen to 6.4% by 2010, a 50% reduction over the entire four years. The missing data from

2008 does not allow us to make any statements as to the impact of the renewed tobacco prevention funding in Gilchrist County beginning in 2008.

Another area of focus of the Gilchrist County Tobacco Prevention Program is youth secondhand smoke exposure. The health effects of secondhand smoke are well established, and the United States Surgeon General has stated that there is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure. Reducing youth exposure to secondhand smoke is difficult, because most secondhand smoke exposure occurs in the homes and cars of family members and friends. However, 14% of Gilchrist County middle school students and 17% of Gilchrist County high school students report exposure to secondhand smoke by strangers; this type of exposure occurs in public places or on the job.

Figure 5 reveals the comparison for secondhand smoke exposure among Gilchrist County high school youth when compared to all Florida high school students. From 2006 to 2008, there was a 3.7% increase in secondhand smoke exposure among Gilchrist County high school students, compared to an 8.3% decrease among that age group statewide. After the funding was restored in Gilchrist County, high school youth reported a 7.5% decrease in secondhand smoke exposure compared to an 8.2% reduction among high school students statewide. The represents a huge change within Gilchrist County during a period of time in which the relative rate of decrease statewide remained stagnant.

Middle school students in Gilchrist County reported an 11.2% drop in secondhand smoke exposure between 2006 and 2010; the lack of

Florida Youth Tobacco Survey, *continued*

2008 data once again makes it difficult to analyze the impact of the renewed funding.

The reduction of secondhand smoke exposure in Gilchrist County is likely the result of educating a population that was previously under-informed on the risks. However, the inability to make dramatic reductions in secondhand smoke exposure statewide may reflect the fact that it has been increasingly difficult to educate adult smokers about the issue of smoking around children and teens. It almost seems as if many adults are tuning out this information. Because most secondhand smoke exposure occurs in the homes and cars of family and friends, this is a major hurdle to reducing youth exposure to secondhand smoke.

Another problem is the restriction to enacting local laws to reduce secondhand smoke exposure in public places. The current Florida Clean Indoor Air Act preempts local governments from enacting such laws, which prevents Gilchrist County from creating smoke-free parks. Such laws would reduce secondhand smoke exposure in locations frequently visited by youth.

A large component of the Gilchrist County Tobacco Prevention Program is youth outreach. The Quit Doc Research and Education Foundation is convinced that the return of these programs over the last two years accounts for the overall decrease in youth tobacco use in Gilchrist County demonstrated in the 2010 FYTS.

The Gilchrist County Youth Prevention Programs consist of a combination of school-based educational programs and funding of the Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) program in Gilchrist County schools and local 4-H Clubs.

Figures 6 and 7 show the expansion of youth outreach programs over the last two years. Figure 6 reveals that the percentage of **Gilchrist County high school students reporting that they received any tobacco prevention education has increased by 12.1%, compared to a decrease statewide of 6.3%; similarly.**

In 2006, 49.1% of middle school students report that they received any tobacco prevention education; that number rose to 93.6% of all middle school students by 2010! Again, the missing 2008 data make it impossible to evaluate those numbers before and after the renewed funding, but it seems reasonable to assume that the increase is a direct result of funding these youth outreach programs.

Figure 7 looks at *comprehensive* tobacco prevention programs. This data reveals that Gilchrist County excels in this category. Gilchrist County high school students report a 6.1% decrease in the number receiving comprehensive prevention education, which is still better than the 14.0% drop reported statewide. The best explanation is that the primary high school outreach program, SmokeScreeners, is not really a comprehensive tobacco prevention program; as a result, we saw a sharp increase in the number of high school students reporting participation in the category of *any tobacco prevention program*.

Among Gilchrist County middle school students, there was a 785% increase in participation in comprehensive

tobacco prevention programs between 2006 and 2010. That is not a typographical error; in 2006, only 3.4% of Gilchrist County middle school students participated in comprehensive programs, compared to 30.1% in 2010. Again the missing 2008 data limits our ability to assess whether this dramatic increase took place before or after the renewed funding became available.

You may ask yourself why there is such a dramatic difference in tobacco prevention programming between Gilchrist County and Florida as a whole. Quite simply, the focus of the tobacco prevention programs has changed over the last year, with more focus on local changes in tobacco policies. Many tobacco prevention programs have been forced to use their limited resources to focus on policy change, decreasing their outreach programs. The Quit Doc Research and Education Foundation elected to continue its outreach efforts in addition to the required policy change initiatives. It is our belief that our continuing commitment to outreach programs is reflected in the results of the 2010 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey.

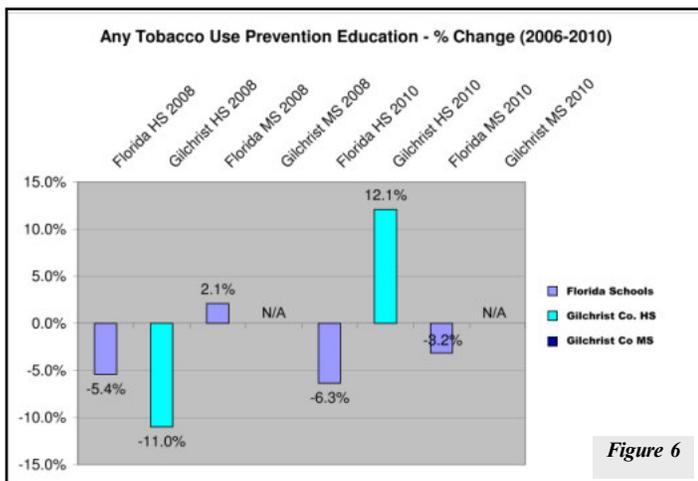


Figure 6

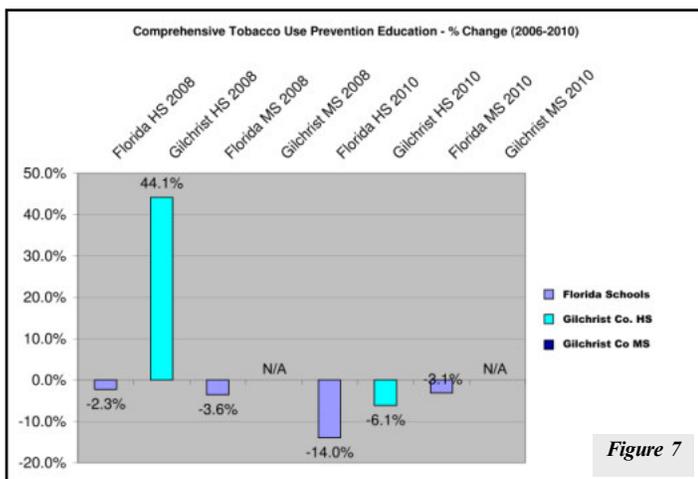


Figure 7

For additional information on the Florida Youth Tobacco Survey, visit http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/epi/Chronic_Disease/FYTS/Intro.htm, or contact the Quit Doc Research and Education Foundation at 866-355-7848.

Close, and It *Is* a Cigar!

Tobacco Manufacturers are Accused of Exploiting a Tax Loophole to Boost Sales

By David Kesmodel, *The Wall Street Journal*

Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. But sometimes, according to critics of the tobacco industry, it may be little more than a cigarette.

Last year, Congress sharply increased the federal excise tax on "little" cigars—filtered, often sweetly favored products that are similar in size and shape to cigarettes. Some manufacturers responded by increasing the weight of their little cigars so they qualified as conventional, "large" cigars, which are taxed at lower rates.

Now, a surge in sales of the small, inexpensive cigars is attracting the scrutiny of members of Congress and a prominent anti-smoking group, who say that tobacco manufacturers are exploiting this tax loophole.

Currently, little cigars—those weighing three pounds or less per thousand—are taxed at the same rate as cigarettes, about \$10.07 per carton. But cigars heavier than three pounds per thousand are taxed at 52.75% of the manufacturer's price, resulting in taxes of only about \$2 to \$4 per carton for the smaller products in this bracket.

Many small cigars already weighed almost three pounds per thousand before the tax increase, so some manufacturers needed only to modestly increase the amount of paper, filter or tobacco in their cigars to meet the higher threshold.

In the 14 months since the excise-tax increase, sales vol-

umes of cigars classified as large more than quadrupled to 12.3 billion units, according to the federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. Sales of products listed as "little" cigars fell by 79%.

U.S. Rep. Henry A. Waxman, a California Democrat, said the House Energy and Commerce Committee he chairs is investigating whether some manufacturers in the \$8 billion cigar industry are avoiding taxes.

The committee also is looking into whether some companies are violating Food and Drug Administration rules by marketing flavored cigars that are little different from cigarettes to attract the youth market. The FDA last year banned sales of cigarettes that include flavors other than menthol, and said its ban could encompass products labeled as cigars if they meet its definition of a cigarette.

"It appears that some tobacco companies are attempting to evade tax and health laws that protect our children," Mr. Waxman said in an interview. He said the weight changes made by manufacturers to reduce their tax burdens were "efforts to evade the law" and "should be stopped."

In April, the committee sent letters to the heads of six tobacco companies, including such little-cigar makers as Swisher International Inc. and Prime Time International Co., seeking information on the

marketing of the small cigars and other tobacco products. Prime Time International declined to comment for this article, while an executive at Swisher didn't return phone calls. Many other little-cigar manufacturers didn't respond to requests for comment.

Ronald Denman, general counsel for General Tobacco, a company that manufactured "filtered" cigars—the industry term used to describe the small, non-conventional cigars—until earlier this year, said his company raised the weight of its products so it could pay a lower tax rate.

"If you can do something that is legal ... at a lower cost, I don't know that there are many companies that wouldn't," he said. His company is shutting down because of financial problems unrelated to the tax controversy.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, an antismoking group in Washington, is urging members of Congress to rewrite the tax definitions of little cigars and cigarettes to better distinguish the products from each other and from large, conventional cigars.

Danny McGoldrick, vice president of research for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, said changing the weight threshold to 4.5 pounds per thousand would help address the issue without affecting tax rates for products such as blunts and cigarillos "that really are cigars."

The group, he said, is concerned that the tax gap allows filtered cigars—including those with flavorings such as wild cherry and peach—to be sold inexpensively, making them attractive to minors.

Closing the tax gap may be worth a few hundred millions of dollars in revenue each year for the U.S. government, according to people in the tobacco industry. Congress in 2009 raised the excise taxes for cigarettes,

cigars and other tobacco products to help finance the expansion of a children's health-insurance program backed by President Barack Obama.

Those tax increases, as well as the shaky economy, have prompted some cigarette smokers to switch to the small filtered cigars, according to tobacco retailers.

"Those blow off the shelves," said Andrew Beaupre, manager of a Cigarette Outlet store in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Customers pay as little as \$1.27 a pack of 20 filtered cigars, he said. The lowest-priced cigarette brand the store sells is about \$3.75 a pack.

Darren Collett, president of Collett Enterprises Inc. of Seymour, Ind., which operates 18 Smoker Friendly stores in Indiana and Kentucky, said his sales of filtered cigars rose more than 30% since the tax increase. Manufacturers have met tax rules by adjusting the weight of their cigars, he said, "and ethically I see nothing wrong with it."

The tax and trade bureau data show that combined sales volumes for little and large cigars rose 41% in the first 14 months since the excise-tax increase, while cigarette volumes continued to decline, a sign some cigarette smokers are switching to the small cigars.

A person close to the conventional-cigar industry said volumes in that segment were down about 5% in the first half of this year, so the increase in overall cigar sales appears to stem from rising sales of the filtered cigars.

Total revenue figures for small cigars are hard to come by. The Cigar Association of America, a Washington trade group, estimates that retail sales of all cigars, including the small variety, totaled about \$8.3 billion last year, about double the figure in 2008 as tax rates jumped.



Some tobacco companies have increased the weight of their small cigars (top), so they qualify as large, "conventional" cigars (bottom). This changes the way these products are taxed.

Feds Propose Graphic Warning Labels

By Michael Felberbaum, Associated Press Tobacco Writer

Corpses, cancer patients and diseased lungs are among the images the federal government plans for larger, graphic warning labels that would take up half of each pack of cigarettes sold in the United States.

Whether smokers addicted to nicotine will see them as a reason to quit remains a question.

The images are part of a new campaign announced by the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services [last November] to reduce tobacco use, which is responsible for about 443,000 deaths per year.

"Some very explicit, almost gruesome pictures may be necessary," FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg said in an interview with The Associated Press. "This is a very, very serious public health issue, with very, very serious medical consequences," such as cancer, heart disease, strokes and lung diseases.

The share of Americans who smoke has fallen dramatically since 1970, from nearly 40 percent to about 20 percent, but the rate has stalled since about 2004. About 46 million adults in the U.S. smoke cigarettes.

In the same period, the average cost per pack has gone from 38 cents to \$5.33. Much of those increases are from state and federal taxes.

It's unclear why declines in smoking have stalled. Some experts have cited tobacco company discounts or lack of funding for programs to discourage smoking or to help smokers quit.

The new prevention plan is part of a law passed in June 2009 that gave the FDA authority to regulate tobacco, including setting guidelines for marketing and labeling, banning certain products and limiting nicotine. The law doesn't let the FDA ban nicotine or tobacco.

The FDA is proposing 36 labels for public comment. They

include phrases like "Smoking can kill you" and "Cigarettes cause cancer" and feature graphic images to convey the dangers of tobacco.

"It acts as a very public billboard because you all of the sudden are reading something about lung cancer from that pack behind the cash register, whereas before you were just reading 'Marlboro,'" said David Hammond, a health behavior researcher at the University of Waterloo in Canada, who is working with the firm designing the labels for the FDA.

Some of the labels include a man with a tracheotomy smoking a cigarette, a cartoon of a mother blowing smoke in her baby's face, rotting and diseased teeth and gums, as well as cigarettes being flushed down the toilet to signify quitting.

The agency will select the final labels in June after reviews of scientific literature, public comments and results from an 18,000-person study. Cigarette makers will then have a year and three months to start using the new labels.

The new warning labels are to take up the top half of a pack — both front and back — of cigarettes and contain "color graphics depicting the negative health consequences." Warning labels also must constitute 20 percent of advertisements.

In recent years, more than 30 countries or jurisdictions have introduced labels similar to those proposed by the FDA. The U.S. first mandated the use of warning labels stating "Cigarettes may be hazardous to your health" in 1965.

While it is impossible to say how many people quit because of the labels, Hammond said every source of evidence suggests that the labels do spur people to quit.

Canada introduced similar warning labels in 2000. Since then, its smoking rates have declined from about 26 percent to about 20 percent. How much



Samples of graphic warning labels proposed by the FDA.

the warnings contributed to the decline is unclear because the country also implemented other tobacco control efforts.

The labels should shock people and be effective in deterring smokers, but how much is the question, said Marvin Goldberg, the Bard professor of marketing at Pennsylvania State University.

"There's no silver bullet. Will this wipe out smoking? No, but it will put a dent in it," Goldberg said.

Graphic labels "are tremendously effective," said Stanton Glantz, a tobacco researcher at the University of California at San Francisco. He said the argument that the warning labels are offensive, so people ignore them, has been cooked up by cigarette companies.

If that were true, the tobacco industry wouldn't be fighting them so hard, Glantz said.

Reynolds American Inc., parent company of the nation's second-largest cigarette maker, R.J. Reynolds, is reviewing the labeling plan. But spokesman David Howard said the legality of the new labels is part of a pending federal lawsuit filed by the company, No. 3 cigarette maker Lorillard Inc. and others.

The tobacco makers in the suit had argued the warnings

would relegate the companies' brands to the bottom half of the cigarette packaging, making them "difficult, if not impossible, to see."

Anti-tobacco advocates are applauding the federal campaign and the new warning labels.

"This is going to stop kids from starting to smoke ... and it's going to give smokers a strong incentive to quit smoking," said Patrick Reynolds, grandson of R.J. Reynolds and executive director of the Foundation for a Smokefree America. Reynolds' father, brother and other relatives died from smoking-related illnesses.

Smokers themselves were skeptical that the labels would have much effect.

"I don't think they're going to be a deterrent at all for people who already smoke. Most people start smoking when they're young, and I don't think they're going to think about the effects," said 27-year-old Zak Hoffman of Cincinnati, who has been smoking since he was 14.

"I think more tax increases would have more of an effect than scare tactics," said 20-year-old Gina Gatano, a student who works at a downtown Cincinnati coffee shop.

Opinion: R.J. Reynolds Uses Names and Images of Cool U.S. Cities To Market Camel Cigarettes to Kids

Statement of Matthew L. Myers, President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

Joe Camel may have been put out to pasture, but his spirit lives on in R.J. Reynolds' latest marketing campaign that once again tries to make Camel cigarettes cool, fun and rebellious – and appealing to kids. The new campaign cynically uses the names and images of trendy U.S. destinations, including Seattle, Austin, San Francisco, Las Vegas, New Orleans, and Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood, in an attempt to make Camel cigarettes cool again. RJR has unveiled cigarette pack designs bearing the name of each city on its Camel web site and has told the media that it will sell limited edition cigarette packs with the city names in December [2010] and January [2011].

It is deeply disturbing that RJR is using the good name and hard-earned reputation of these great American cities to market deadly and addictive cigarettes, especially in a way that blatantly appeals to children. Certainly the citizens and leaders of these cities do not want to be associated with a product that kills more than 400,000 Americans every year. RJR showed truly shameless disregard for the death and suffering its products cause by calling this campaign a "celebration" of the locations involved.

This campaign shows that RJR has not changed and continues to have blatant disregard for the health of America's children. We call on RJR to immediately end this marketing campaign and withdraw its plans to introduce the special edition cigarette packs. We also urge state attorneys general to investigate whether this promotion violates the 1998 state tobacco settlement's prohibition



Marketing for the "Camel Austin" pack claims: "...Camel two-steps its way to Texas for a Lone Star taste of that independent spirit and all-access pass to the 'live music capital of the world.'"

on tobacco marketing that targets children. This campaign also underscores the need to step up the implementation of proven measures to reduce tobacco use. These include effective regulation of tobacco products and marketing, including the graphic cigarette warnings unveiled this week by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration; well-funded tobacco prevention and cessation programs nationally and in every state; higher tobacco taxes; and smoke-free workplace laws.

Several weeks ago, RJR launched this new online and direct mail marketing campaign, called the "Break Free Adventure," in which the Camel brand "visits" 10 different U.S. locations over a 10-week period. Visitors to the Camel web site can win prizes by reading a clue and guessing where Camel is that week. Each week, a new package design for Camel cigarettes is unveiled that features the name of that week's location and some of its

iconic images. Other locations include Route 66; Bonneville Salt Flats, UT; Sturgis, SD; and Winston-Salem, NC.

The locations involved have several qualities in common, including an association with independent music, fun times, rebellion and freedom of the road. By associating Camel cigarettes with these locations and their trendy reputations, RJR is continuing its long-standing efforts to make the Camel brand appealing to youth. It truly is the Joe Camel campaign all over again. It echoes many of the youth-appealing themes of the Joe Camel campaign, in which the now-banned cartoon camel was often depicted with fast cars and motorcycles or having fun at parties.

RJR has a long history of trying to make Camel cigarettes appealing to youth, most notoriously with the Joe Camel campaign that ended in 1997. In 2004, RJR introduced candy and fruit-flavored versions of Camel, including one called Kauai Kolada that was condemned by Hawai'i officials as "disgusting and offensive" for using the Kauai name to market cigarettes. In 2005, state attorneys general forced RJR to end a promotion called "Drinks On Us" in which the company mailed customers celebrating their birthdays a promotional package of drink coasters, mixed drink recipes and slogans encouraging excessive drinking. In 2007, RJR launched its Camel No. 9 cigarette, which a newspaper dubbed "Barbie Camel" for its fashion-oriented marketing campaign and promotional giveaways such as lip balm and cell phone jewelry that clearly appealed to girls.



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