

Stiff cigarette tax.... cuts sales

Oregon's tax hike of 30 cents per pack for an anti-tobacco campaign has resulted in an 11.3 percent decrease in per-capita sales of cigarettes over the past two years, according to federal health officials. Sales dropped by about 10 packs per person from 1996 to 1998, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday.

During the previous four years,

Oregon had a 2.2 percent increase in sales per capita. The CDC calculated that the tax increase alone contributed to a 6.3 percent decline. Oregon voters in November 1996 raised cigarette taxes to 68 cents per pack. The extra money went toward smoking prevention and education programs and expanding insurance coverage.

Oregon is the third state to re-

port a dramatic drop in smoking as a result of the combined use of stiff cigarette taxes and aggressive anti-tobacco programs, the CDC said. Similar findings have been reported by Massachusetts and California, the federal agency said.

Some studies have shown that for every 10 percent increase in price, there is a 4 percent decrease in smoking among adults,

the CDC said. The CDC said smuggling or cross-border sales of cigarettes probably did not contribute to the decline in Oregon because a large portion of the state's population lives in Portland, near Washington state, where cigarette prices are even higher.

Nationwide, the CDC said, the average annual rate of decline in cigarette sales from 1990 to 1997 was 1.4 percent.

Law School 101 seeks to attract Minority Students

EUGENE, OR — In its continuing effort to promote diversity, the University of Oregon School of Law will mark National Minority Law Month on Feb. 26 with a special day-long program for minority students interested in finding out more about law school.

"Law School 101" is targeting minority high school and college students, as well as all members of minority groups across the state who may be interested in attending law

school.

The program, which is free and open to the public, takes place from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 26, at the UO law school Grayson Hall (UO Law Center), 1101 Kincaid St.

"We are strong believers in the importance of a diverse student body, and are concerned about misconceptions that affirmative action challenges are narrowing opportunities for people of color on law campuses," says Katherine Jernberg, director of

admissions, UO School of Law. "We're trying to reach out to minorities in high schools and colleges, as well as in the general population, to let them know that they are welcome, and that a law degree is an attainable goal which will open the door to a multitude of rewarding career opportunities."

The event's sessions will be held in Rooms 121 and 229 at Grayson Hall and include a mock trial, roundtable discussions and simulated law classes.

Participants include UO law faculty and students, and members of the minority affairs committee of the Lane County Bar Association.

Law School 101 is sponsored by the UO School of Law, with funding from the national Law School Admission Council Minority Affairs Committee.

For information or to register, contact Ben Greer, assistant to the director of admissions, UO School of Law, (541) 346-1810.

Three former Attorneys General named to Tobacco Fund Panel

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Former Attorneys General of California, Oregon and Tennessee will head up a panel created to allocate \$8.6 billion to states for their role in the historic tobacco settlement agreement reached between state Attorneys General and the tobacco industry on November 23, 1998.

A total of 46 states. The District of Columbia, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have applied for a share of the funds which will be allocated based upon

the extent of the state's contributions to the litigation or resolution of state tobacco litigation.

The state payments are to be decided by a three-member Strategic Contribution Fund Panel. As outlined in the settlement agreement, two of the three members — former Oregon Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer (1981-1991) and former Tennessee Attorney General Mike Cody (1984-1988) — were selected by the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) Executive Committee. They selected

former California Attorney General John Van de Kamp (1983-1988) as Attorney General. Cody, Frohnmayer, and Van de Kamp worked together in landmark multistate settlements, such as the oil overcharge litigation where states and territories successfully received multi-billion dollar judgements and settlements against major oil companies for petroleum price violations.

On January 7, 1999, the NAAG Executive met in Washington, D.C. and selected Cody and

Frohnmayer to serve on the Strategic Contribution Fund Panel. In announcing these appointments, NAAG President Mike Moore of Mississippi said, "We are excited to have a fair-minded team of former colleagues who understand the complexities of this undertaking. The state will profit from their experience and expertise." Moore added, "During their tenure as Attorneys General, they were held in high regard by their colleagues from all across the country."

Rep. Kafoury Vouches Support for school Funding

SALEM — Citizens participation in the opening debate on school funding will help shape the outcome of how much state lawmakers budget for education, Representative Deborah Kafoury told educators, students and concerned parents who are part of a coalition that is lobbying legislators for adequate funds for education.

"It is extremely imperative for you to bring your concerns to Salem" Representative Kafoury said. "As a product of public

schools, it is touching for me to hear that students are reading old text books, lack even most basic computer software and barely have space to sit due large classes. I hope my colleagues will listen and learn from your valued suggestions on how to save education now."

"I will continue to challenge the House leadership to purge out school funding, to put education funding before tax breaks and to support distressed area schools." Said Rep. Kafoury "I am behind

your coalition all the way."

Students at Jefferson High School told the legislator personal stories of inadequate computers, large class size, outdated books and inadequate school resources.

"My commitment to adequate and sustainable school funding is unwavering. Our children's hope and opportunities are the casualty for starving schools of adequate funding and I am not ready to subscribe to that" Rep. Kafoury told the coalition.

Drug tested to control Parkinson's disease progression

HOUSTON — A drug for Lou Gehrig's disease/ALS is being studied as a possible treatment to slow or stop the progression of Parkinson's disease.

"Current Parkinson's drugs treat only the symptoms," said Dr. Joseph Jankovic, director of the Parkinson's Disease Center and Movement Disorders Clinic at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "This drug, riluzole, might offer a way to block a brain chemical contributing to nerve cell death."

Parkinson's disease, a progressive neurodegenerative disorder, affects movement, rigid muscles and balance problems. It is caused by deterioration of the brain's nerve cells that release dopamine, a chemical necessary for normal movements. Parkinson's patients have increased activity in a brain region called the subthalamic nucleus," said Jankovic, a staff neurologist at The Methodist Hospital. "This overactive area produces too

much glutamate, a brain chemical that in excess can overstimulate nerve cells and cause them to die."

Researchers hope that blocking the release of glutamate will slow or stop Parkinson's-related nerve cell death. Riluzole is known to prevent the release of glutamate.

"In studies of animals with experimentally-induced Parkinson's disease, the blocking of glutamate has lessened the disease," Jankovic said.

In a pilot study at Baylor, riluzole appeared to be well tolerated by Parkinson's patients. However, the study was too small to determine if the drug was able to slow progression. The current multi-center study will involve approximately 1,050 patients in 11 countries. Forty-three U.S. centers are participating.

"Each center will enroll patients with early-stage Parkinson's disease who have not been treated with the standard Parkinson's medication, L-

dopa, or with other dopamine-related drugs," Jankovic said. "Symptoms of resting tremor, rigidity or slowness must have been present less than three years." Early-stage patients taking L-dopa or other Parkinson's drugs can be considered for the study if they stop their medications one-month prior to entering the study. Participants will receive either riluzole or an inactive medication for two years and will have brain images, called PET scans, taken at the beginning and end of the study. The imaging will allow researchers to see the condition of the nerve terminals in the brain that release dopamine.

"Since Parkinson's patients normally lose these nerve terminals, we hope to see that patients on riluzole have greater preservation of those areas in the brain," Jankovic said. Patients wanting study information can call 1-800-220-8610.

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