

Budget for a Better Minnesota

Kaila's Story: Why Reducing Tobacco Use Matters

Kaila Narum of Andover, Minnesota was in 6th grade when her father was diagnosed with esophageal cancer caused by decades of smoking. At 37 years-old, he had just a 5 percent chance of survival.

Against the odds, after chemotherapy and radiation treatment, Kaila's dad was pronounced cancer free. But one day later that year he began feeling sick again, was rushed to the hospital, and soon thereafter slipped into a coma. The cancer had spread to his stomach and lungs; and doctors told Kaila there was nothing they could do to save her father's life.

Kaila was 14 years old when her father passed away. Matt Narum was one of more than 25,000 Minnesotans who have lost their lives to tobacco use over the last ten years.

From his hospital bed, Kaila's father made her promise that she would never smoke or use tobacco products – a promise she has kept to this day. More than that, Kaila has become active in the American Cancer Society, and a strong advocate for reducing the use of tobacco in Minnesota, particularly among young people.

Kaila supports Governor Dayton's proposal to reduce tobacco use in Minnesota, saying it would be a "serious motivator" to prevent young kids and others from smoking.

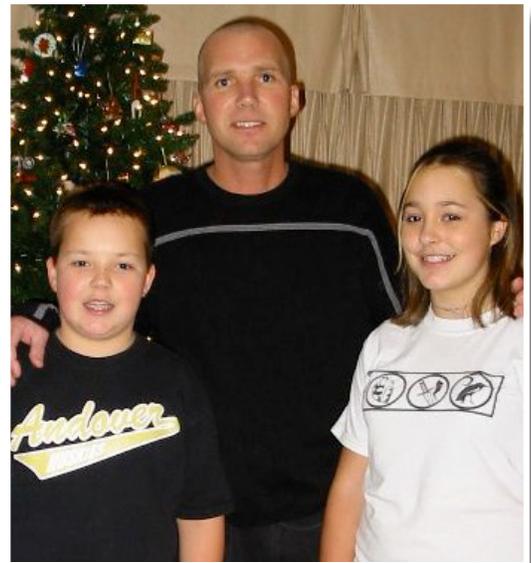
Saving \$10 Billion and Helping 26,000 Kids

Governor Dayton's budget proposes to increase the cigarette tax by 94 cents per pack. This proposal would generate \$370 million in new revenue for the state; but that revenue would be dwarfed by the short-term and long-term savings it generates by preventing deadly disease and tackling runaway health care costs.

Right now, tobacco use remains Minnesota's single most preventable cause of death and disease. Tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke accounts for at least 5,000 deaths in Minnesota each year. And every year, Minnesota loses \$2.87 billion in increased medical costs due to tobacco use. Still, tobacco use remains a problem in Minnesota. In fact, a new report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows Minnesota has slipped out of the top 10 among states with the lowest smoking rates.

Increasing the tax rate for cigarettes and other tobacco products will have significant benefits for public health in Minnesota and will drive down smoking-related health care costs. Every 10 percent increase in cigarette costs reduces youth smoking by 6.5 percent and adult rates by 2 percent. That means raising the tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products by 94 cents can be projected to cut youth smoking in Minnesota by 11 percent (saving 25,800 kids from becoming addicted adult smokers). And it will save Minnesotans more than \$10 billion in health care costs over the next five years due to fewer cases of smoking-induced cancer, heart disease, and stroke.

At \$1.60 per pack, Minnesota currently ranks 21st among all states for cigarette taxes. This compares to a high of \$4.35 per pack in New York and a low of 17 cents per pack in Missouri. Raising Minnesota's cigarette tax by 94 cents per pack would more closely align our tobacco tax rate with neighboring Wisconsin.



“One week after my 14th birthday, I lost my father to cancer. The past seven years of my life have revolved around the effects of cancer.”

