

OUR VIEW

Time to rethink cigarette tax

With the coming of the new legislative session, a coalition of health organizations is pushing once again for a \$1 increase in the cigarette tax to pay for **anti-smoking** efforts and health costs related to smoking.

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It's a proposal that didn't go far last year, but may fall on friendlier ears this year.

And it should.

Wisconsin's cigarette tax, now 77 cents a pack, is the 30th highest in the nation. The increase would likely generate \$227 million a year, which would help the state's under-funded **anti-tobacco** efforts.

The catch, of course, if a new tax is passed, is to make sure it goes directly to offsetting smoking-related health costs now covered by Medicaid and to **anti-tobacco** programs, which support initiatives such as Wisconsin's QUIT line.

Since smoking costs Medicaid \$480 million a year, according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, if **anti-tobacco** efforts continue to be successful in getting people to quit, and more importantly, discouraging kids from starting in the first place, the cigarette tax money will be well spent.