

Most questions a legislator or staffer will ask you during your district meetings will be easy for you to answer with the knowledge you have about your community and your program. However, in order to help you prepare for the trickier questions you may be asked, here are some sample questions and suggested answers for you to practice.

Legislator/Staff: I know that California has one of the lowest smoking rates in the nation and has achieved many important public health victories in tobacco control – so why is this still an issue?

You: Yes, the California Tobacco Control Program is working. The state and its locally funded tobacco control programs have saved more than one million lives and more than \$86 billion in health care costs. However, the tobacco industry is still doing everything it can to addict people to tobacco products. And these efforts are having a deadly impact on the state, costing 35,000 lives and \$18.1 billion in health care costs and lost productivity each year. In fact, in our community _____ *[go to C-STATS at <http://webtecc.etr.org/cstats/> for local data]*

How are you funded?

We are funded by Proposition 99, the tobacco tax that passed in 1988 *[background information: In November 1988, California voters approved the passage of the landmark California Tobacco Tax and Health Promotion Act also known as Proposition (Prop) 99. This initiative increased the state cigarette tax by 25 cents per pack and 20 percent of this revenue is earmarked to fund the California Tobacco Control Program (CTCP). CTCP is the nation's longest running and most comprehensive public health intervention of its kind, nationally or internationally]*

What do you want me to vote for?

Actually, we are not here to ask you to vote on anything, we are here to educate you about the successes and challenges of the tobacco issue in your district and in our communities. In addition, we have brought with us a resolution that we would like you to sign. We are asking you to support recommendations of California's Master Plan for Tobacco Control to support our efforts to protect Californians from the harmful effects of tobacco.

Who wrote California's Master Plan for Tobacco Control?

The Master Plan was written by the Tobacco Education and Research Oversight Committee (TEROC), a legislatively mandated body responsible for overseeing the tobacco education and research programs funded by Proposition 99. This Master Plan sets forth policy and budget recommendations to enhance the future effectiveness of California's Tobacco Control Program.

My boss has a policy to not sign pledges.

We would still ask that you show the PACT Resolution to the legislator. It's really just an opportunity for him/her to express his/her support of the tobacco control efforts and commitment to reducing the tremendous burden that tobacco use places on the people of California. Even if the legislator can't sign the PACT Resolution because of a no pledge policy, there are other opportunities to demonstrate support for our program such as coming to our local event.

What do you think about the tobacco tax initiative [California Cancer Research Act] that will be on the June 2012 ballot [or asks about a specific bill]?

Because we are funded by the Proposition 99 tobacco tax, we cannot take positions on bills or ballot initiatives, so we do not have a comment on any particular bill or ballot initiative. We are here today to talk about the work we are doing in your district and to provide an overview of the successes and challenges for tobacco control efforts in California. I know that the American Lung Association in California, American Cancer Society and American Heart Association are involved with the tobacco tax initiative and could provide you with further details.

I have heard that there is a new federal law giving the FDA the power to regulate tobacco products, can you tell me about that law?

You're right, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act was signed into law in June 2009. This law gives the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the authority to regulate the manufacturing, marketing and sale of tobacco products and will create new strong nationwide tobacco control policies. But we can't just leave it up to the FDA to handle this issue because there is still a lot we can and need to do locally. Actually, we are here today to talk about our efforts to reduce the burden of tobacco use in your district, but would be happy to follow up with your office to provide more information about the provisions in this new federal FDA law *[background information: fact sheets on the FDA law are available on the Center's website at www.Center4TobaccoPolicy.org/federalpolicies/].*

Tricky Questions Continued

What can you tell me about the new federal report on menthol in cigarettes?

An advisory committee to the Food and Drug Administration submitted a report on menthol in cigarettes in March 2011. The report includes a recommendation that removing menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health in the United States. We are here today to talk about our efforts to reduce the burden of tobacco use in your district, but would be happy to follow up with your office to provide more information about this report *[or if you are working on menthol resolutions at the local level, talk about your local work]*.

What next? Are you going to ban smoking everywhere?

Our efforts are focused on protecting Californians from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke in places where they are still vulnerable. In 2006, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) identified secondhand smoke as a Toxic Air Contaminant (TAC), based on a rigorous four-year, scientific study that included public comment and independent peer review. Secondhand smoke joins benzene, arsenic and diesel exhaust on the TAC list. This just illustrates how dangerous secondhand smoke exposure is and the need to protect people in places where they are still being exposed.

Honestly, I think tobacco advocates already infringe on people's rights.

We believe everyone has a right to breathe clean air. We want to continue to protect those who are most vulnerable from a lifetime of addiction. Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in California. It continues to harm our state by hurting the health of individuals across California and overburdening the state's economy. It is important to remember the successes of the Tobacco Control Program, which has helped to save more than one million lives in the past 20 years. However, the work is not done and the tobacco industry continues to spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year to get people addicted to tobacco products. In fact, in our community _____ *[Add details about how your local program helps people.]*.

What is your opinion on other programs that are funded by tobacco taxes, such as Proposition 10 or Department of Education TUPE grants? I've heard reports state that their money could be used more efficiently?

We are here today to talk about the Tobacco Control Program funded by Proposition 99 and are not here to comment on other programs. There are many other

programs funded by Proposition 99 and other tobacco taxes so you should contact someone funded by those programs to ask them any questions about the use of those funds. The Tobacco Control Program, which funds all of us here today through Proposition 99, has been modeled throughout the nation and the world and has led to countless achievements in saving lives and money in California.

What do you think about the new report on smoking from _____? [names a tobacco-related study or report that you are not familiar with]

We are here today to talk to you about the great tobacco control work that is going on around the state and specifically the work that we are doing in your district. However, we also want to be a resource for you on any tobacco-related questions. I am not familiar with the report that you mentioned but would be happy to research it and answer any questions you may have. Can I follow up with you next week?

What are you doing about smoking in casinos?

While respecting American Indian Sovereignty, self-determination and economic independence, the state has funded a number of local and competitive grantees who are working with local tribes and Indian gaming groups on the issue. The Tobacco Control Program is also conducting research to understand the economic influences and to show that smokefree casinos are not only good for health, but good for business. The goal is to provide employees and visitors of tribal casinos with the same workplace protections as those provided by the state.

What should I tell my boss about why you were here today?

We want him/her to know that California's Tobacco Control Program has been successful at saving lives and saving money in California and in his/her legislative district. We have done great work to reduce the burden of tobacco but, there is still more we can do. The tobacco industry continues to devastate California and our community by targeting youth and vulnerable populations to get them addicted to their deadly products. And we're here to remind the legislator that we continue to work to protect district residents from exposure to secondhand smoke and make sure retailers do not sell tobacco to kids. We want to be a resource for you.