

**Statement before the Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness For Georgians  
Public Hearing in Savannah, Georgia**

August 31, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Jackie Mull, and I live in the small coastal town of Shellman Bluff, in McIntosh County. I am a volunteer with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.

I want to thank every member of this very important Council for taking the time to come to Savannah to learn about our recommendations for Georgia.

As a volunteer of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network I want to urge you to support no less than a \$1 per pack increase in the state excise tax on cigarettes, as well as, a corresponding increase in excise tax on smokeless tobacco. We believe such an increase will be a Win, Win, Win for Georgia.

First, it's a Win for Public Health – there is sound scientific evidence that a significant increase in tobacco taxes will drive down consumption, especially among our children. Most adult smokers today started before the age of 18. For every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes, there is a 7% reduction among kids, and a 4% reduction among adults. If we can keep kids from starting to use tobacco products, Georgia will save lives from tobacco addiction and tobacco-related illness.

Secondly, it's a Win for Georgia Taxpayers - an increase of \$1 per pack for cigarettes will generate over \$400 million in new state revenue, as well as, lower the costs of smoking related illnesses that are paid for by Medicaid (\$527 million a year in Georgia). Tobacco addiction costs \$550 per Georgia household annually. It is only fair that those who choose to use the product should shoulder more of the costs.

Thirdly, it's a Win for Georgia's Leaders - a \$1 per pack increase in tobacco taxes is extremely popular with Georgia voters, consistently polling with 73% in favor at that rate. This high level of support is consistent among Republicans, Democrats and Independents.

I have been a non-smoker all my life. Until 3 years ago I have always lived with someone who smoked. The reason for giving up tobacco was part health but mostly economics. This is proof that a higher tobacco tax will drive down consumption.

We know that Georgia ranks very near the bottom among the states when it comes to tobacco taxes. Again, I urge you to support no less than a \$1 per pack increase in the state excise tax on cigarettes and a corresponding increase on smokeless tobacco. Georgia can no longer afford to ignore this sustainable and fair revenue source, and help the next generation of youth be tobacco free.

Thank you.  
Jackie Mull