

American Lung Association: Issues statement in response to Wisconsin's final budget

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Contact: Dona Wininsky
[262-703-4840](tel:262-703-4840)
Dona.wininsky@lung.org

The American Lung Association in Wisconsin released the following statement in response to Wisconsin's final 2017-2019 budget:

The American Lung Association is pleased that Wisconsin has a biennial budget and that work can now move forward. The Lung Association is pleased that the budget continues to include funding for the important work done by the Wisconsin Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. Smoking is still the number one cause of preventable death, and despite many successes over the past decades, more than 7,000 Wisconsinites die each year from tobacco-related illnesses.

We are disappointed that there will be no provision for increasing the tax on little cigars, which are in reality, just cigarettes wrapped in brown paper. Youth are especially price sensitive and there is no logical reason whatsoever that these cigarette "imposters" should continue to receive preferential treatment when it comes to price. Wisconsin should be doing everything in its power to deter kids from smoking, and making the products prohibitively expensive to youth is a proven method to accomplish that.

The American Lung Association now calls on the legislature to limit kids' access to

little cigars and other tobacco products, by supporting AB225 and SB307, which requires ALL tobacco sales to be kept behind the counter or in a locked cabinet, and all sales to be clerk assisted. Presently, those restrictions apply only to cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products.

Linda Witucki, Executive Director of the American Lung Association in Wisconsin said, "If we can't price them out of kids' reach, then at the very least we should make sure that we keep them out of their reach physically."