

What are Tobacco Taxes?

It is a tax imposed on all tobacco products including cigarettes, vapes, and other vaporized tobacco items. The total taxation amount varies from state to state. The highest taxes are in Washington D.C., charging \$4.50 in additional fees per pack of cigarettes. Additionally, New York and Connecticut each charge \$4.35 in additional fees. These are the highest fees in the nation. On the other hand of the spectrum, Missouri charges \$0.17 in taxes, and Virginia charges \$0.30 in taxes. These are the lowest and second lowest fees in the nation, respectively.

The Impact of Tobacco Taxes

The original purpose of tobacco taxes, aside from gaining additional profits, was to lower the tobacco consumption rate. Tobacco leads to many health issues such as lung cancer, asthma, and heart disease. Tobacco taxes have proven to reduce consumption rates to an extent. The University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) reports that a 10% increase in tobacco costs can lead to a 4% decrease in consumption among adults, as well as a 6% decrease among adolescents.

Alternative Measures

Some sources, such as the World Health Organization, state that taxes are the most effective method to reducing tobacco consumption. On the other hand, UCSF reported that there are other measures that are more effective. They found things such as strong warning labels would reduce smoking by 16%, and smoke free workplaces could reduce smoking by nearly 29%. Alternatives such as strong media campaigns could reduce youth smoking by 22%. These measures have been implemented on local levels, and many community officials support their effectiveness.

Youth Effects

There has been a large push over the past several years to remove nicotine, tobacco, and vape-like products from the youth atmosphere. Several nonprofits have made it their mission to find ways to tackle the tobacco industry. Many of these organizations have suggested that not only will increased tobacco taxes reduce the consumption for youth, it will reduce secondhand smoke inhaled from adult smokers.

Political Spectrum

On a political scale, this issue isn't too large. There have been some pieces of legislation introduced to either higher or lower the taxes, but it hasn't been part of the central policy agenda. As you may be able to tell, most politicians don't really discuss this topic either. The current state of tobacco taxes has been widely accepted, and there likely won't be much change in the coming years.