



## **Talking Points and Role Play Scenarios: The Price of Tobacco and Youth Initiation**

**Scenario 1:** You are talking with a friend about information on the cigarette excise tax that you just learned about at a TRU meeting.

You: Did you know that the current cigarette tax in North Carolina is only 35 cents? The average state cigarette tax in the U.S. is \$1.18!

Friend: I don't understand why that's a big deal.

You: Well, tobacco use is the #1 preventable cause of death, and costs North Carolina \$2.4 billion in direct medical care annually.

Friend: You mean that higher taxes on tobacco would help to prevent death and reduce costs?

You: Yes—studies have shown that higher taxes on tobacco induce adults to quit, prevent youth from starting to smoke, and bring increased revenue to the state. It is a win-win-win situation for everyone if the cost of tobacco is higher.

Friend: Does it really make an impact on youth starting to smoke?

You: Yes, research indicates that a 10% rise in price reduces smoking among youth by 7%.

Friend: Wow, it's true, our public health and the state of North Carolina would really benefit from a tobacco tax increase!

**Scenario 2:** You are working at a TRU booth at a church fair, with a display on the price of tobacco and youth initiation.

TRU youth leader: Hi, we are talking with people about the price of tobacco. Could I ask if you would you support or oppose a \$1 per pack increase in the state cigarette tax?

Participant: Well, I don't know. I don't smoke myself, but isn't raising the cigarette tax an unfair burden on the poor?

TRU youth leader: Unfortunately, poor smokers bear an unfair share of health consequences from smoking, like lung cancer and emphysema. People with lower

incomes are much more likely to smoke—they are also more responsive to price increases and are more likely to quit when the price is higher.

Participant: Hmm...you mean that raising the price of tobacco would get people to quit, and might help those who are poor have more money in their pockets and better health?

TRU youth leader: Yes, studies have shown that if NC would raise its cigarette tax to the national average, 47,800 adult smokers would quit and the long-term healthcare savings to the state would be \$1.93 billion dollars.

Participant: Well, then yes! I do support a \$1 per pack increase in the state cigarette tax!

**Scenario 3:** You are making a presentation to the county commissioners about the importance of a higher price for tobacco products in order to decrease youth initiation and use.

Presenter: ...And in conclusion, a higher tax on tobacco products is a “win-win-win” situation—higher taxes induce quitting, reduce the consumption of cigarettes, and prevent youth from starting to smoke.

Commissioner: What about the tobacco farmers? What about the tobacco industry workers? I think that this would hurt them.

Presenter: Thank you for your questions. Even in those states with the highest levels of tobacco farming and tobacco manufacturing, the economic consequences from the elimination of all U.S. smoking would be minimal – and the increasing diversification of those states’ economies in recent years may have eliminated those net consequences altogether.

Commissioner: Are you saying that it won’t impact jobs and the economy then?

Presenter: It is a myth that higher tobacco taxes and tobacco control generally will result in substantial job losses. Money not spent on tobacco will be spent on other goods and services, creating alternative employment.

Commissioner: Oh—I hadn’t thought of it like that before. Okay, thanks.

### **What are some other Scenarios that may come up in your community?**

It is always helpful to brainstorm different situations and questions that may come up in your own community. You can create several talking points and write down specific facts in order to be prepared to respond to a variety of situations.

