

Testimony of Dr. Richard Sargent,
Vice Chair of the Montana Tobacco Prevention Advisory Board
House Appropriations Subcommittee
February 10, 2005

The colored paper is from the National Conference of State Legislatures with recommendations from the CDC for dealing with different funding levels for tobacco control programs. Given this matrix; in the last fiscal biennium MTUPP was funded between 'Low' and 'Moderate' levels. The majority of State funding goes to Communities and is spent in Montana. The Montana Tobacco Prevention Advisory Board put the funding into Community Coalitions and asked them to run Youth Programs and earned media where possible. Many have done excellent work in building coalitions and organizing youth activities.

A fixed \$80,000 per tribe was allocated by the last legislature. Because the legislature did the allocation the MTUPP program and Board were in the position of offering oversight and technical assistance but could not require actions or that the money be spent on tobacco control. To their credit most of the tribes hired dedicated personnel and are developing programs to educate their communities about the harmful effects of commercial tobacco abuse and promoting traditional tobacco use in culturally appropriate ways.

Even before Initiative 149 passed, increasing the tobacco tax, QuitLine services had very high demand. With the tax increase, call volume in January was much more than anticipated. Money was shifted from QuitLine Promotion to the service itself but still the demand is quite high. QuitLine services are the most cost effective use of cessation dollars.

State Staff are paid for with federal grant dollars. Currently the program is staffed below the minimum recommendations of the federal grant. With additional funding The CDC recommends additional staffing to bring the total between 8 and 16 state employees. The department is asking for two additional FTE, bringing them to 8.5 FTE with some funding going to cost allocations for administrators, IT support and a job share for an epidemiologist. This is a very minimal level of staffing.

The current proposal envisions expanding Community Programs to cover more of Montana, expanding QuitLine services to meet the demand and partnering with education to expand youth and school based program offerings. Funding is not adequate for programs in every school and the board anticipates a competitive grant process as outlined in the matrix from NCSL.

To date media has been limited to QuitLine services. With expanded funding we foresee educational and outreach media campaigns to promote a tobacco free lifestyle and reinforce the messages of the community and school based programs.

The current proposal also includes money for the Department of Revenue for enforcement of the increased tobacco taxes, prevention of smuggling and youth marketing restrictions in the venues they inspect. There is concern, generated by a report from Forrester Research, that smuggling could account for fourteen to twenty per cent of cigarette sales in Montana. Forrester Research is a paid Phillip Morris consultant so the value of this enforcement effort will be reassessed.

Having said all this I want all of you to understand: We are not reinventing the wheel. We know how to run an effective program. This same program has been very successful everywhere it has been fully and consistently funded. Montana's track record has been one of very limited and inconsistent funding.