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**THREE STUDENT BODY PRESIDENTS AT THREE REGENT INSTITUTIONS ENDORSE
TOBACCO TAX INCREASE**

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IOWA CITY— The three student body presidents from University of Northern Iowa, University of Iowa, and Iowa State University have declared their support for a tobacco tax increase this year.

“From a public health perspective, an increase in the tobacco tax makes sense,” said Joe Murphy, Student Body President at the University of Northern Iowa. “The effects of such an increase will reduce health care costs and help to close the gap between medical costs related to smoking and the revenue generated from the current tobacco tax.”

Currently, Iowa has \$277 million in Medicaid costs for tobacco related illnesses while only receiving \$87 million in revenue from the tobacco tax.

Within the past year, the UNI and ISU Student Senates have passed resolutions endorsing the tobacco tax increase and UI Student Government leaders have endorsed it.

“I support the tobacco tax increase for the future of Iowa’s youth,” said Mark Kresowik, The University of Iowa Student Government President. “Our health care costs, and thus part of our tax burden, will be related to the number of new tobacco users, which is inversely proportional to the price of tobacco.”

According to research, high taxes on tobacco reduces the number of people who choose to smoke thus reducing the incidence of tobacco related death and disease. Experts suggest that nearly 28,000 Iowa adults would stop smoking if the tax were raised to \$1.00 per pack.

"Students are directly affected by the health and financial impact of smoking. Individuals in the 18-22 age bracket are the primary employees in bars and restaurants," said Angela Groh, President of the Government of the Student Body at Iowa State University. "As a result of this, students are constantly facing the health risks associated with second hand smoke. Our generation will be financing the health costs associated with smoking long into the future."

The student leaders also stressed the fact that Iowa’s current tobacco tax of 36 cents ranks 42nd out of 50 states.

The student leaders will be speaking to opinion leaders and legislators throughout the upcoming legislative session. All three student body presidents are currently enrolled as undergraduates in their senior year.

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*All of the facts were obtained through the Iowa Department of Public Health compiled by October 31, 2005.