

## More cash sought to fight smoking

Critics rip state's use of \$285 million tobacco settlement

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Anti-smoking advocates, local officials and health-care providers criticized the state Tuesday for spending only a fraction of the \$285 million in tobacco lawsuit settlement funds it receives each year on smoking prevention and cessation programs.

They called on the legislature to increase state spending on anti-cigarette efforts and urged more local governments to adopt stricter bans on public smoking and higher licensing fees for retailers who sell tobacco.

Craig Johnson, the mayor of Elk Grove Village, which adopted a far-reaching anti-smoking measure last week, said Illinois leaders were negligent for using the tobacco settlement money for programs other than smoking prevention.

"We think that's atrocious," Johnson said at a community health forum organized by Alexian Brothers Hospital Network. "They're using the money to balance the budget and they're not earmarking it for what it was meant for, which is ridding society of this evil."

Also addressing the forum was anti-smoking activist Patrick Reynolds, grandson of the founder of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.

Reynolds started the Foundation for a Smokefree America and frequently delivers his message to groups across the country.

He cited a recently released report by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids that showed Illinois ranked 34th among states in spending on smoking prevention programs.

Illinois spends only 17 percent of the annual expenditure recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said the report from the Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group.

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) has urged the state to allocate more of the money for smoking-cessation and health programs.

"I am never satisfied with the amount of dollars we put into prevention," Feigenholtz said from Springfield. "Unfortunately, when dollars are scarce, we have to make some very difficult decisions."

Laws restricting smoking have been enacted in more than 2,000 municipalities across the country, Reynolds said, and 400 communities require 100 percent smoke-free workplaces.

In addition, 14 states have laws requiring nearly 100 percent smoke-free protection.

"I believe we're reaching a tipping point nationally with 100 percent smoking bans," Reynolds said. "But Illinois is behind. There is a need for Illinois to get up to speed on that."

Illinois currently receives about \$285 million a year as part of the landmark 1998 settlement with the big tobacco companies, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health.

But for each of the last three years, Illinois has earmarked only about \$11 million of those funds for anti-smoking efforts, said Janet Williams, spokeswoman for the Illinois Coalition Against Tobacco. The coalition wasn't part of Tuesday's forum.

In recent years, tobacco settlement money has paid for a variety of non-smoking programs, from prescription drug benefits for senior citizens to tax rebates.

Other states also use tobacco money to plug budget deficits and pay Medicaid services.

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