



May 12, 2011

Senator Kevin Eltife  
Texas Senate  
P. O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711

Senator Eltife,

Today HB 2599 by Ritter will be heard in Senate Finance Committee.

Texas PTA has long endorsed policies that increase the cost of tobacco products because high cost is an impediment to youth tobacco use. Texas PTA endorsed the filed version of the bill in House committee because it did not include this tax reduction.

We were told after the tax reduction language was added to the bill, that the reduction in the tax would increase use and, therefore, revenue. While this may be the case we suggest to you that:

- 1) The health care costs to Texas of illness and disease related to tobacco use of all kinds will increase if consumption increases, and
- 2) We believe that policymakers will find it difficult to defend a policy of reducing a tax in order to increase use of a tobacco product to generate revenue.

Further, at a time when Texas is struggling to find every cent in order to fund critical health and human services needs for our elderly and struggling to meet the basic needs for public education funding, Texas PTA feels that a reduction in any tax is a move in the wrong direction.

It would have been my preference to speak directly to Senator Eltife, but that has not been possible. The last days of the session are a whirlwind for all of us. Please accept my apologies for submitting this letter in place of a face to face conversation. I am available by phone today at 512.431.5384.

Texas PTA appreciates your service to Texas, looks forward to continuing to work with you in the future, and respectfully requests that you remove the tax cut from the language of HB 2599.

Best,

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cc: Members of Committee on Senate Finance