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## Tobacco tax beneficial

Nebraska's cigarette tax hasn't changed for 15 years. At 64 cents per pack, we have one of the lowest in the nation. However, this isn't because we haven't tried.

Another bill to increase the tax on tobacco products has been introduced by Sen. Sara Howard, and I hope this time's the charm. Tobacco's been costing Nebraskans far too

much for far too long; health care spending directly related to tobacco use totals \$795 million every year. A \$1.50-per-pack tax increase as Sen. Howard has proposed has the potential to cause a great decline in smoking, saving \$493 million in long-term health care costs.

The biggest benefit of this bill, however, would be to the health of Nebraskans. It's

proven that a meaningful tobacco tax increase can prevent youth from smoking, and encourages current smokers to quit. Abstaining from tobacco is beneficial to everyone's health. Just five years after someone stops smoking, their risk of mouth, throat, esophagus and bladder cancers is cut in half.

I, as an American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network advocate and high school student, would like to thank Sen. Howard for considering Nebraska's health. I see the impact tobacco has on the well-being of my community and peers every day and understand what it is like to lose a loved one to the habit. I hope that Legislature takes this opportunity now to positively influence the future

of every Nebraskan, smokers and non.

**Brooklyn Larimore,  
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