

Associated Industries: Floridians want expanded cigarette fees

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Sixty-five percent of Floridians support imposing a fee on cigarette manufacturers that did not sign the 1997 Tobacco Settlement Agreement, according to poll results released Monday by Associated Industries of Florida.

Tobacco products made by manufacturers that signed the agreement currently cost an extra 40 cents a pack, a release from AIF said.

Companies that did not sign the agreement make more than 20 percent of the cigarettes sold statewide, said Barney Bishop III, president and chief executive officer of AIF, in the release.

“Companies like Dosal sell some of the cheapest cigarettes in the state and even with a 40-cents-per-pack increase, their cigarettes will still be cheaper than the name-brand manufacturers’ and more attractive to the low-income smokers who can least afford health care,” said Bishop.

Dosal Tobacco Corp., based on Miami, has distribution centers in Clearwater and Lakeland. “If the whole point of the Tobacco Settlement was to ensure we as a state could pay the health care costs of future Medicaid recipients, it only makes sense that all cigarette manufacturers help pay for these costs,” Bishop said.

Zogby International, based in Utica, N.Y., conducted the survey by phone to 801 randomly selected individuals from Dec. 7 to 11.

AIF will continue its support for non-participating manufacturers’ fee legislation throughout the 2010 legislative season.