

# TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

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Help states collect taxes from tobacco

While our nation continues to struggle in this economic downturn, legislation currently before Congress could bring state governments billions of dollars in additional revenue each year. The Prevent All Cigarette Trafficking Act (the PACT Act) will further enable governments to collect tobacco taxes already required by law. This legislation simply clarifies current tobacco tax regulation and will bring much-needed revenue to our government.

Sales tax regulations that are difficult to enforce have led to a rash of illegal online purchases of tobacco products. These federal, state and local taxes placed on tobacco products are easily avoided by the online distributors who sell their products without collecting the government-mandated taxes.

Additionally, the PACT Act includes stiff penalties for irresponsible online sellers who do not verify purchasers' ages, contributing to underage smoking.

The PACT Act is crucial, as it would enhance our current tobacco laws and work to end counterfeiting and illegal tobacco sales all over the nation. If passed, this legislation will protect the businesses that lawfully collect taxes on tobacco products, and state governments will be better positioned to collect the sales taxes to which they are already entitled.

Ultimately, the PACT Act would amend the current Jenkins Act to help law enforcement locate and prosecute these violators. Our economy is desperate for additional revenue, and the PACT Act will contribute billions of dollars to state governments.

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