

TUA NEWS RELEASE

TAXPAYERS UNITED OF AMERICA

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Cook County Proposes Huge Tax Hike on Poor

Chicago--Cook County Board boss Toni Preckwinkle's promotion of a \$1.00-per-pack tax increase on cigarettes as a humanitarian initiative has questionable motives, according to Rae Ann McNeilly, director of outreach for Taxpayers United of America (TUA).

"Such an increase targets those who can least afford it," said McNeilly.

"Smoking is most prevalent among the poor without even a high school diploma, so why propose a tax that will hurt them more than help them? This is also the same group hardest hit by unemployment and crime, which will also be bolstered by this tax increase."

"It is either naïve or dishonest to promote this tax hike from the bully pulpit at the Stroger Hospital, exploiting the truly sick and suffering as well as those who are dedicated to helping people quit smoking. Recent cigarette tax hikes have done nothing to decrease smoking. From 2006 to 2010, Cook County and Chicago held the country's second highest tax rate. During that same period, smoking decreased by only 4% in Illinois, but decreased by 18.4% nationally, according to the CDC."

"The county's revenue from cigarette taxes fell from \$200 million to \$131 million, or 34%, after the cigarette tax-increase in 2006. Increasing cigarette taxes does nothing to reduce the number of smokers but, instead, pushes them to purchase across county lines or out of the trunks of black-market dealers."

"It is difficult to believe that Cook County board president Toni Preckwinkle doesn't understand the realities of cigarette tax-hikes and their unintended consequences. If revenue decreases, crime increases, and legitimate Cook County businesses will lose business, what is the intent?"

"I will be testifying on this outrageous proposal at the public hearing on Friday, October 26 at 9:00 a.m. in the County Building, 118 N Clark, Room 569. I urge everyone to attend one of the hearings and let the board know that we won't stand by while taxes are raised on businesses and low-income residents."

Public Hearings on the 2013 Cook County Budget:

- Thursday, October 25, 2012 – 6:30pm Public Hearing – Skokie Courthouse (Forest Preserve begins at 6:00 PM)
- Friday, October 26, 2012 – 9:00am – Public Hearing – County Building, 118 N Clark, Room 569
- Tuesday, October 30, 2012 – 6:30pm Public Hearing – Markham Courthouse (Forest Preserve begins at 6:00 PM)
- Thursday, November 1, 2012 - 6:30 pm Public Hearing – Maywood Courthouse

Taxpayers can pre-register to speak at any of the hearings at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/C6JTW3H>.

Founded in 1976, TUA is one of the largest taxpayer organizations in America.

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