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## POLITICS AND POLICY

# Anti-Smoking Programs Are Slashed

*As Budget Constraints Prompt States to Trim Cessation Efforts, Rate of Adult Smokers Stops Declining*

By DAVID KESMODEL And BETSY MCKAY

Updated Nov. 9, 2010 12:01 a.m. ET

Many cash-strapped U.S. states are slashing budgets for tobacco-prevention programs, raising alarms among public-health groups as the nation's progress toward getting adult smokers to quit has stalled.

The adult smoking rate was 20.6% in 2009, the same as a year earlier and largely unchanged since 2004, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That amounted to 46.6 million adult smokers in 2009.

States have cut their combined funding for smoking prevention in the current fiscal year to the lowest level since 1999, according to data gathered by a coalition of antismoking groups for a report that will be released later this month.



Christopher Otega smokes Oct. 14 in a park near New York's City Hall. About 21% of U.S. adults smoke, according to federal government data. *Associated Press*

The \$517 million allocated by states for tobacco prevention and cessation in fiscal-year 2011 is down 9.2% from \$569 million a year earlier and 28% less than states spent in 2008, according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, a Washington advocacy group preparing the report, along with the American Lung Association and others.

The latest amount still exceeds the \$300 million spent by states in fiscal 1999, when many programs were getting under way or accelerating their efforts following the landmark Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement in 1998 between 46 states and cigarette companies that was designed to help states recoup the cost of treating sick

smokers. Under the agreement, the tobacco companies were to pay an estimated \$246 billion over 25 years to the states, though states are allowed to spend their settlement dollars on needs other than tobacco prevention.

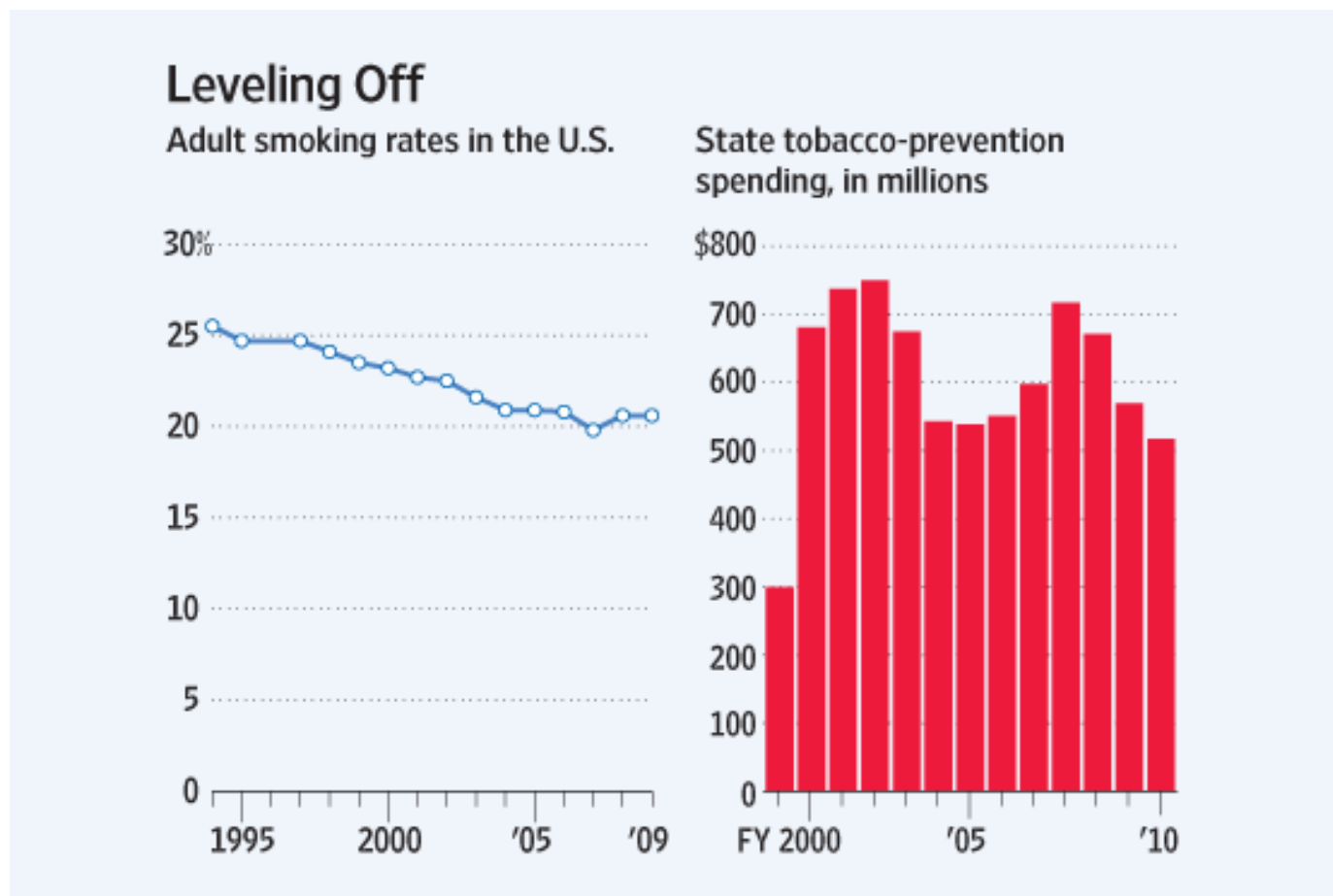
In fiscal 2010, tobacco-settlement revenue amounted to an estimated \$8.1 billion for all states.

Public-health experts and tobacco-control groups worry that states' recent spending reductions could further undermine efforts to counter tobacco-industry marketing, persuade smokers to quit and to deter

young people from starting.

Tobacco use is linked to an estimated 443,000 deaths a year in the U.S., making it the nation's leading cause of preventable death, according to the CDC. A decline in youth smoking rates has also slowed since 2003.

"There's a risk of a setback," CDC Director Thomas Frieden said of the funding cutbacks. "The data are very clear. The more we invest in tobacco control, the fewer people smoke, and that prevents illness, disability, deaths and healthcare costs."



He cited California as an example. The state has run a comprehensive tobacco-control program since 1989 that includes anti-smoking advertising campaigns, toll-free "quit lines" that people use to talk to cessation counselors, and other measures. California's adult smoking rate fell to 12.9% in 2009—the second-lowest in the nation after Utah—from 22.8% in 1988. Several other states reduced their smoking rates by a third or more since the late 1990s after implementing similar programs, Dr. Frieden said.

The spending cutbacks come as the federal government has increased spending on tobacco prevention, with more than \$191 million of short-term grants to states and communities in recent months from the stimulus bill and the national health-care overhaul. The Food and Drug Administration also has new authority to regulate tobacco, including restricting advertising and putting new warning labels on tobacco products.

Smoking-rate declines have stalled in several states that have cut prevention dollars. Ohio trimmed its smoking rate by five percentage points between 2001 and 2005, when it was allocating as much as \$60 million a year to tobacco prevention. In the next four-year span, when its funding dropped to as low as

\$6 million a year, its smoking rate fell by two points—to 20.3% in 2009.

In its current fiscal year, Ohio has \$2.3 million of state funds—money unspent from previous master-settlement revenue—allocated to prevention. It has about another \$3 million from federal funds, some of which are temporary.

Mari-jean Siehl, chief of Ohio's tobacco-use prevention and cessation program, said she doesn't have money to continue the state's tobacco quit-line program in fiscal 2012. "With little to no marketing or educational budget, it's really tough to get the word out about the quit line and some of the other resources we have," Ms. Siehl said.

Shelly Kiser, an Ohio-based antismoking advocate for the American Lung Association, said "the funding we have right now [in Ohio] is like putting a drop of water on a burning fire. It doesn't have a lot of impact."

Washington state slashed its smoking rate 34% over a decade, seeing it drop to 14.8% in 2009, following consistent funding of media campaigns targeting low-income people and other high-risk groups, a quit line that has fielded 150,000 callers since 2000, school programs, and other efforts. State spending on the program reached \$27.2 million in 2007.

Now, with the state facing a projected \$4.8 billion budget deficit for the next two fiscal years, it is redistributing funding for the state tobacco-control program to local health departments for their general use. The program will be left with about \$1.4 million of federal funding for fiscal 2012, said Mary Selecky, the state's secretary of health.

Her team will pursue "very, very targeted work" to reduce smoking among low-income groups, she said, adding, "We're going to do the best with what we have."

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