

House snuffs veto override

By Mike Hasten mhasten@gannett.com

June 17, 2011

BATON ROUGE -- The House failed to override Gov. Bobby Jindal's veto of a bill renewing a sales tax on cigarettes Thursday when 11 House members who voted for the renewal in May switched sides.

The veto means a 4-cent sales tax on each pack of cigarettes sold in the state will expire in 2012, reducing state revenues by \$12 million.

House members, who voted 70-30 to pass the tax renewal, voted 58-44 to override the veto, but 70 votes were needed. Jindal and his staff heavily lobbied lawmakers to change their votes

The House action brought criticism from a national health group and a state budget watchdog.

"The Legislature tried to do the right thing today, and we're proud of their effort," said Andrew Muhl, director of the Louisiana office of the American Cancer Society. "Unfortunately, Gov. Jindal's decision to make cigarettes more affordable is appalling. History will not look upon him or this issue favorably."

Edward Ashworth, director of the Louisiana Budget Project, said, "The governor's decision to veto HB 591 was the worst choice a leader could make. It is a bad policy that will affect our state's health, budget, and future."

Ashworth said lowering the tax on cigarettes makes them more attractive to young people.

"By failing to override the governor's veto, the Legislature has chosen the governor's political needs over the needs of the state and the people," he said.

Among those switching from supporting the bill to upholding the veto were Reps. Jim Fannin, D-Jonesboro; Kay Katz, R-Monroe; Frank Hoffmann, R-West Monroe; Charles "Bubba" Chaney, R-Rayville; Joel Robideaux, I-Lafayette; and Nancy Landry, R-Lafayette.

Fannin spoke for several lawmakers saying, "It's different in an override than it is in a vote for a bill. When I committed to work with the governor, this is part of it."

He said he agreed to support Jindal "if four cents was worth that much for him. It's not worth that much for me."

Asked for a comment, Katz just smiled, waved and walked away.

No House member spoke in favor of upholding the veto.

"There's a time for politics, and there's a time for principles," said Rep. Hollis Downs, R-Ruston. "This time, principle trumps politics."

He said his father died of emphysema, "and I would dishonor his life if I didn't do everything I can to reduce smoking."

[Share on Facebook](#)

[Share by SMS](#)

[Share on Twitter](#)

[Share by Email](#)

More Stories »

River ready for repair

Passenger nabbed for drugs

Suspect reportedly possessed marijuana

Sections

[Home](#) | [Top News](#) | [News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Photos](#) | [Features](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Weather](#)

©2011 thenewsstar.com

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)