AMERICANS for TAX REFORM

Grover G. Norquist
President

1920 L Street NW

Suite 200

Washington, DC

20036

T: (202) 785-0266

F: (202) 785-0261

www.atr.org

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Dear Legislator,

In the face of state budget troubles caused by government overspending, the calls for higher taxes may reach a fever pitch this session; however, I urge you to reject any efforts to increase the burden on Massachusetts taxpayers. **Speaker DiMasi has already stressed his support of a $1 per pack cigarette tax increase to 'plug the hole' in the state's estimated $1.3 billion budget gap. The governor, too, seems open to this irresponsible move.**

In general, tax increases provide a disincentive for reform and remove money from productive use. At a time when the state government is spending more taxpayer dollars than are being taken in, a tax hike is especially lethal. With the economy slowing, now is not the time to throw yet another wrench in the gears of growth and productivity.

Higher taxes will deter businesses from thriving in Massachusetts. Higher taxes on consumers will threaten a strong economy and only further disable one that is weak. **Experience shows that tobacco tax increases encourages illegal activities, including tax avoidance, smuggling and buying and selling on the black market.**

According to a study by Americans for Tax Reform Foundation, last year, taxpayers in the Bay State were forced to work until July 18th just to pay for their share of government spending and regulations. Your constituents rely on you to make sure their overall tax burden will not continue to increase.

As you prepare to face Massachusetts's budget gap, I urge you to reject all calls for tax increases and enact true spending reform instead. **Under the current constraints, taxpayers are depending on you to tighten the state's fiscal belt rather than look to increase taxpayer burden as a bailout.**

Enclosed, please find key facts about tobacco tax increases as well as a copy of ATR's policy brief detailing alternatives to raising taxes. ATR stands ready to assist you in the fight against higher taxes. Please do not hesitate to call on me, or contact our state team, Karri Bragg or Sandra Fabry at 202-785-0266.

Onward,

Grover G. Norquist