

## **Press Release**

### **May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

I carry a pocket watch that used to belong to my grandfather, who died of lung cancer early in the year – a cancer he had been fighting for six years. The cancer hit him after 40 years of smoking. He loved it. Whether it was cigarettes or his corn-cob pipe, my grandfather loved to smoke. Other members of my family have smoked for decades, and continue to.

People seem to support a cigarette tax because it makes them feel morally superior; that smokers deserve to pay more because of their own stupidity. I won't deny that smoking is a hazardous and disgusting practice. The fact is, however, that a tax on cigarettes won't put a stop to smoking; only good education and strong family values can do that. Whether it costs four dollars a pack or ten, cigarettes will still be purchased in this County. People already drive into DuPage from Cook County because our cigarettes are cheaper.

I don't support a cigarette tax. I happen to think the cost of smoking is high enough. I hate the tobacco industry and I am flabbergasted by the people I know who continue to smoke despite knowing the risks they are taking with their health. But that is their choice to make, and they are already paying the price for it.

I can't help but notice that the majority of smokers in this County, and indeed in our country, belong to the working class – to the class that can least afford the extra expenses affiliated with smoking. I'd say they have enough to deal with in the current economic situation, let alone their increased insurance, healthcare, and living costs. If we're going to tax something, I'd suggest we take the money from where it is less dear, such as sales on luxury items. In this way, we would at least be targeting the bracket of our society who could afford to pay just a little more to support their County.

I don't like the idea of extra taxes in general. Our County Board and Chairman wedged themselves into this corner even as they raised taxes and gave themselves pay raises. We were saved from a budget deficit only after a \$40 million bail-out from our State government – which is already in enough financial trouble as it is. This is an example of the “spend, then tax” mentality that has been that of the majority in our County government for decades. We've got to live within our means. The County is growing, and we're feeling the pains of it. Throwing money at the problem won't make it go away. The time has come to take stock of our County's budget, and streamline it to produce the best results for our residents and businesses, while still producing a healthy surplus to save for future crises. We've got to manage our resources efficiently, or we risk getting deeper into trouble. And we've got to include planning for the future in every County budget, so that when an emergency expense should arise, we are prepared, and can proactively serve our citizens.