



## Tobacco Retailer Licensing

# Survey of California Voters

## About Policies in the Tobacco Retail Environment

Public Opinion Research Survey: April 2011

### Background

The sale of tobacco products to minors is a problem in most cities and counties in California. Illegal sales by retailers contribute to the start of a lifelong addiction of many youth to tobacco. To combat this problem, many communities have passed a law that requires retailers to obtain a license to sell tobacco products. A local tobacco retailer licensing ordinance includes an annual fee to fund an enforcement program and provisions for suspending or revoking the license for violations. In addition, some communities are considering other policy options, such as restricting where and how tobacco products are sold, that can be “plugged-in” to the basic licensing ordinance to provide greater health protections for youth.

In April 2011, the Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing commissioned a survey of 600 California voters to gauge the level of support for licensing ordinances and other policies in the tobacco retail environment. The survey was conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research. A memo summarizing the results and other survey documents are available at [www.Center4TobaccoPolicy.org/polling-retailer-policies](http://www.Center4TobaccoPolicy.org/polling-retailer-policies).

### Summary of Key Findings

#### Provisions of a Tobacco Retailer Licensing Ordinance

California voters understand the need for greater enforcement of laws against selling tobacco products to minors. They support a licensing ordinance and the different provisions of such a law:

- 45% feel that it is easy for minors to buy cigarettes at local retail stores
- 83% support requiring store owners to get a license to sell cigarettes and other tobacco products
- 80% favor a fee of a few hundred dollars a year that would be used to enforce the law against selling cigarettes to minors
- 88% agree that a store owner who repeatedly sells cigarettes to minors should have their license to sell tobacco products suspended

#### Policies to Restrict the Location of Tobacco Retailers

California voters support laws that limit where tobacco retailers can be located:

- 73% support a law prohibiting any business located within 1,000 feet of a school from selling tobacco products
- 57% feel that stores that are currently located within 1,000 feet of a school should not be allowed to continue to sell tobacco products if such a law was adopted
- 57% support requiring stores that sell tobacco products to be located at least 500 feet apart from one another

#### Policies to Restrict How Tobacco Products are Sold

California voters support laws that restrict the manner in which tobacco products are sold in the retail environment:

- 82% support requiring stores that sell tobacco products to post warning signs about the dangers of tobacco use
- 66% support a law prohibiting stores that sell meth pipes from also selling tobacco products
- 54% support prohibiting the sale of individual little cigars and cigarillos

## Arguments For and Against Policies in the Tobacco Retail Environment

California voters are more receptive to arguments in favor of restricting the location of tobacco retailers and restrictions on tobacco product sales than they are to arguments opposing these policies. In each section below, the first two arguments listed are in support of the policy and the second two arguments are in opposition to the policy:

### ***Prohibiting Businesses from Selling Tobacco Products within 1,000 Feet of Schools***

- 79% think a good reason to restrict tobacco retailers near schools is that this law will reduce illegal sales to minors
- 79% think a good reason to restrict tobacco retailers near schools is that this law can reduce youth smoking
  
- 48% think a good reason to continue to allow tobacco retailers near schools is that it's wrong for the government to tell stores where they can and cannot do business
- 35% think a good reason to continue to allow tobacco retailers near schools is that a law like this could hurt the economy and jobs during this recession

### ***Requiring Stores to Post Health Warning Signs about Tobacco Use***

- 83% think a good reason to require warning signs is that these signs would encourage people to quit using tobacco and would prevent young people from starting to use tobacco
- 83% think a good reason to require warning signs is that we know that warnings really work in helping people quit using tobacco, so they should be visible before people buy tobacco products
  
- 51% think that a good reason to not require warning signs is that warning labels are already on the tobacco packages and adults can make up their own minds without being forced by the government to see even more intrusive information
- 41% think that a good reason to not require warning signs is that these signs would require retailers to post negative information about the very products they are trying to sell

### ***Eliminating the Sale of Individual Little Cigars and Cigarillos***

- 70% think a good reason to prohibit sales of individual little cigars and cigarillos is that they are inexpensive and marketed to young smokers, so this law would discourage their use among young people and reduce youth smoking
- 65% think a good reason to prohibit sales of individual little cigars and cigarillos is that they are developed and marketed primarily to African Americans and Latinos, so this law can help reduce smoking rates among these groups
  
- 50% think a good reason to allow sales of individual little cigars and cigarillos is that these products are used less frequently than cigarettes, so requiring them to be bought in packages is a needless hassle for the customer
- 50% think a good reason to allow sales of individual little cigars and cigarillos is that it is wrong for the government to tell retailers how to sell certain products

## Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research. This survey data represents information acquired from 600 voters by telephone interview, including both land lines and wireless numbers. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, with about 8% of the interviews conducted in Spanish. The margin of error for the survey results is plus or minus 4% at a 95% confidence level.

## Resources

The Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing has many resources available on tobacco retailer licensing ordinances and other policies in the tobacco retail environment available at [www.center4tobaccopolicy.org/localpolicies-licensing](http://www.center4tobaccopolicy.org/localpolicies-licensing). These include documents that track ordinances in the tobacco retail environment, a fact sheet on drug paraphernalia in tobacco retailers and a document showing the effectiveness of tobacco retailer licensing ordinances in reducing sales to minors. For model ordinance language for many of the policies in the survey, visit the website of the Technical Assistance Legal Center at [www.phlpnet.org/tobacco-control](http://www.phlpnet.org/tobacco-control).