



**National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society**

January 28, 2017

Representative Leslie Osborn, Chair  
House Appropriations and Budget  
Re: HB 1841 Cigarette Tax, Proponent

Chair Osborn:

I am writing on behalf of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society regarding HB 1841, the proposal to increase cigarette tax in Oklahoma. The Governor has proposed \$1.50 per pack tax increase and the National MS Society supports that effort.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, often devastating disease of the central nervous system, which disrupts the flow of information within the brain and body. The disease course is unpredictable and varies from person to person. Symptoms range from numbness and tingling in the extremities, to blindness and paralysis.

- Compared to non-smokers, smokers are almost two times more likely to be diagnosed with MS and more likely to be diagnosed with progressive multiple sclerosis.
- Passive (second hand) smoke exposure has also been associated with an increased risk of developing multiple sclerosis in adults and children.
- Once diagnosed with MS, smokers may experience more severe symptoms, increased relapse frequency, and greater disability compared to non-smokers.
- The risk of converting to secondary progressive MS, in which there is a progressive worsening of neurologic function and accumulation of disability over time, is higher and occurs more quickly in smokers than in non-smokers.

The National MS Society believes that a \$1.50 cigarette tax with revenue directed toward Oklahoma health programs, would improve the quality of life and health outcomes of people living with MS. This strikes to the very core of our mission. Everything we do is focused so that people affected by MS can live their best lives as we stop MS in its tracks, restore what has been lost and end MS forever. A \$1.50 cigarette tax helps move Oklahoma closer to that vision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kari A. Rinker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kari Rinker, MPA  
Senior Advocacy Manager,  
Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma