

Kentucky Legislators' Views on Tobacco Policy

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- Context:** Kentucky leads the nation in adult and teen smoking prevalence. Even though Kentucky is one of the most tobacco-dependent states, tobacco policy is subject to change in light of possible national tobacco legislation.
- Objective:** To describe the degree of agreement among Kentucky legislators regarding tobacco control and tobacco farming policy, and to discover whether use of the policy Delphi method produces a shift toward consensus on tobacco policy.
- Design:** A two-round policy Delphi study was conducted using in-person interviews.
- Setting:** Legislators' offices in Frankfort, Kentucky.
- Participants:** Volunteer sample of 116 Kentucky legislators (84% response rate).
- Main Outcome Measures:** Degree of agreement on tobacco control and tobacco farming policies.
- Results:** Lawmakers were highly supportive of policies to lessen the state's dependence on tobacco, and were favorable toward stronger tobacco control policies. There were discrepancies, however, between what policies legislators thought were desirable and what policies were realistic. Tobacco interests were identified as possible explanations for this disparity. Tobacco allotment ownership was associated with less support for tobacco control and tobacco farming policies. A shift toward consensus on tobacco policy was achieved in the second round for 45% of the interview items common to both rounds.
- Conclusions:** Kentucky legislators were highly supportive of reducing the state's dependence on tobacco and more supportive of tobacco control policies than expected. The policy Delphi method has the potential for shifting opinions about tobacco policies among state legislators. The findings of this study identify opportunities for public health policy change in one of the most tobacco-dependent states in the United States.
- Medical Subject Headings (MeSH):** tobacco, health policy, Delphi technique, tobacco industry. (Am J Prev Med 1999;16(2):81-88) © 1999 American Journal of Preventive Medicine

Introduction

Kentucky leads the nation in tobacco use. Of Kentucky high school students, 47% report smoking in the past 30 days¹ compared to 34.8% of U.S. teens²; 16% of all Kentucky high school students report smokeless tobacco use in the past month,¹ compared to 9.4% of U.S. teens.² Among Kentucky adults, 31.6% smoke compared to the national average of 23.6%.³ Kentucky also leads the nation in burley tobacco production. Burley tobacco is blended with flue-cured tobacco to make cigarettes. In

1996, Kentucky burley tobacco yielded over \$704 million, making it the state's primary legal cash crop.⁴ Tobacco is grown in 119 of Kentucky's 120 counties and on two thirds of Kentucky's 88,000 farms. Because Kentucky's agricultural economy is less diversified than that of other major tobacco states, its economic and cultural dependence on tobacco has the potential to significantly influence public policy. As a result, Kentucky has weak tobacco control laws, and the second lowest cigarette excise tax in the nation at 3¢ per pack.

Studies clearly document U.S. public support for health policies that reduce the harm caused by tobacco products.⁵⁻⁷ However, little is known about public policy-makers' beliefs about tobacco issues other than their voting records and media reports, with one exception. In 1994, a survey of North Carolina, Texas, and Vermont legislator's attitudes toward tobacco and voting intentions revealed support for youth access laws.⁸

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Considering that proposed national tobacco legislation has changed the context for tobacco control and tobacco farming, it is especially important to measure political sentiment accurately by discovering areas of consensus, tracking changes in opinion, and distinguishing between what policies are desirable and which are realistic. The purpose of this study was to describe the degree of agreement among Kentucky legislators regarding tobacco control and tobacco farming policy, and to discover whether use of the policy Delphi method produces a shift toward consensus on tobacco policy. A two-round policy Delphi method was used to collect data and describe agreement about tobacco control and tobacco farming policy options among state lawmakers. The policy Delphi method is a systematic, intuitive forecasting procedure used for obtaining, exchanging, and developing informed opinion on a particular topic. Intuitive forecasting procedures are best suited for complex problems for which policy alternatives are not well defined, and for which theories or empirical data are not available to make a forecast.⁹ The method was developed by the RAND Corporation in the late 1940s¹⁰ and has been used to study consensus on a variety of issues including drug policy,¹¹ education,^{12,13} nursing administration,¹⁴ and military policies.¹⁵

The policy Delphi method is a multistage process involving the initial measurement of opinions (first round), followed by data analysis, design of a new questionnaire, and a second measurement of opinions (second round).¹⁶ This process can be repeated until consensus is reached or saturation of opinion occurs. The policy Delphi method's unique strength is that it incorporates education and consensus-building into the multistage process of data collection, therefore enabling description of agreement about specific policy options among key players in the policy decision process. Although the method is successful with mailed questionnaires, using in-person interviewing greatly increases participation.¹⁷

Methods

Policy Delphi interview guide. The first-round interview guide was designed based on the results of a pilot test with 30 randomly selected former Kentucky lawmakers. The Delphi questions included three types of items: reliability, desirability, and feasibility. The reliability items presented a statistic or estimate of a future event, and participants were asked to judge the credibility of the statement. The desirability items elicited opinions about the advisability of certain policy goals. The feasibility items determined the likelihood that specific options would be adopted by the Kentucky General Assembly. The response choices were rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The first-round interview guide contained 57 items about tobacco farming and tobacco

control policy options. Tobacco farming items included opinions about farm diversification, agricultural infrastructure, and the federal price support program. Tobacco control items included issues/policies related to youth access, clean indoor air, marketing/advertising, smoking cessation, excise taxes, and litigation. Data also were obtained on: tobacco use, experience with growing/leasing tobacco, political party affiliation, years served in the General Assembly, and sociodemographic characteristics. Examples of Delphi items used in the first- and second-round interviews are presented in Table 1.

The second-round interview guide included the 11 desirability and feasibility items for which there was not agreement on first round. An example of a second-round item in Table 1 reveals how data collected in the first round were incorporated into the second-round interview guide. Eight other items included in the second round assessed the acceptable amount of an excise tax, opinions about expanding Kentucky's Medicaid formulary to cover smoking-cessation treatment, and views about the proposed national settlement. In addition, three open-ended questions were asked to determine participants' perceptions of the discrepancies between the desirability and feasibility items. These open-ended questions were developed based on the discrepancies discovered at first round between desirability and feasibility responses to specific items.

Participant recruitment. Letters requesting participation in the study were mailed to all 138 legislators serving in the 1997–1998 Kentucky General Assembly. Legislators were contacted by phone to schedule an appointment. Seven legislators refused to participate; 15 others did not respond to repeated contacts, and one legislator died prior to beginning the second-round interviews. Therefore, 116 lawmakers (84.1%) participated in the first round and 115 in the second round.

Interview procedure. The study was approved by the University of Kentucky Medical Institutional Review Board. Prior to data collection, the Principal Investigator met individually with members of the House and Senate leadership to describe the scope of the study, elicit ideas for recruiting lawmakers, and enlist their help in encouraging others to participate. The first- and second-round interviews were conducted by an experienced male interviewer in the legislators' offices during legislative sessions (first round, May to September 1997; second round, September 1997 to January 1998). To maintain consistency, the same interviewer conducted both interviews. The first-round interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes, and the second round approximately 20 minutes. After being admitted to a lawmaker's office, the interviewer described the purpose of the study and explained what was expected of the legislator. Each lawmaker was assured confidentiality and told

Table 1. Examples of Delphi items and the distribution of responses for first and second rounds

Item	First round				Item	Second round			
	Responses	n	%			Responses	n	%	
<i>Reliability:</i> "One out of every four teenagers in Kentucky smokes cigarettes. In your opinion, how reliable is this statement?"	Very reliable	21	18.1		<i>Desirability:</i> In regard to strengthening the youth access law, 72% believe it is desirable. How desirable do you think it is to strengthen our youth access law?	Very desirable	43	37.4	IQD = 0.00
	Reliable	79	68.1			Desirable	50	43.5	
	Unreliable	16	13.8			Undesirable	21	18.3	
						Very undesirable	1	0.9	
<i>Desirability:</i> "Even though it is illegal to sell tobacco products to those under 18, Kentucky's teenagers can easily buy tobacco products. How desirable is it for Kentucky to strengthen the current youth access law?"	Very desirable	46	40.0						IQD = 2.00
	Desirable	37	32.2						
	Undesirable	30	26.1						
	Very undesirable	2	1.7						
<i>Feasibility:</i> "Kentucky could penalize store owners instead of clerks for selling tobacco products to children by imposing stiff civil penalties. How likely is it that the General Assembly would pass such a policy?"	Very likely	4	3.4						IQD = 1.00
	Likely	44	37.9						
	Unlikely	56	48.3						
	Very unlikely	12	10.3						

IQD = interquartile deviation.

that a summary of findings would be provided them at the conclusion of the study. Each interview item was read aloud, and the lawmaker was asked to respond. Of the first round interviews, 67.2% were conducted after the proposed national tobacco settlement was announced on June 20, 1997. During second-round interviews, responses to open-ended questions were recorded verbatim as field notes.

Data analysis. Interquartile deviations (IQD) were used to determine the degree of agreement on individual items of the interview guide. An IQD is the absolute value of the difference between the 75th and 25th percentiles of the responses to an item, with smaller values indicating a higher degree of agreement. The IQDs from the first round ranged from 0.00 (most agreement) to 3.00 (least agreement). Items with low agreement (IQD > 1.00) were retained for the second interview. For example, the reliability and feasibility items displayed in Table 1 had IQDs of 0.00 and 1.00 on the first round, respectively, and were not asked on the second round. The desirability item had an IQD of 2.00 at first round, and was included in the second-round interview. Associations between demographic characteristics (e.g., tobacco allotment ownership and political party) and item responses were assessed using either chi-square analysis or Fisher's exact test, as appropriate. The McNemar test was used to discern the degree of shift in responses from the first to second round. This nonparametric version of the paired *t*-test determines whether the percentage of respondents who become more positive on a given item differs significantly from the percentage who become more negative. Field notes

from the second-round interviews were transcribed and content analysis was used to identify themes and patterns.

Results

Demographic data. The majority of legislators interviewed were male (90.5%) and Caucasian (98.3%) and had a mean age of 50.3 years (SD = 10.2). On average they had served 7 years in the General Assembly (SD = 6.9). Distribution of participation in the five regions of the state ranged from 76.0% in the Louisville area to 91.2% in the Central region. The sample comprised 71 (61.2%) Democrats and 45 (38.8%) Republicans. Seventy-four percent were college educated. Forty-seven (40.5%) had grown or leased tobacco, but only 24 (20.7%) owned tobacco allotments at the time of the first-round interview. Tobacco allotment owners either grow tobacco themselves or lease the property to others who grow the crop. Forty (35%) were tobacco users (cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and/or smokeless tobacco). Legislators who were tobacco allotment owners were more likely to use tobacco products than those who were non-owners ($\chi^2 = 5.0, P = 0.03$).

Degree of Agreement. The degree of agreement for selected Delphi items is summarized in Table 2. Over two thirds of the legislators agreed that imports of foreign tobacco were more damaging to Kentucky tobacco farmers than anti-smoking efforts. Almost all the Kentucky legislators agreed that nicotine was addictive. In regard to secondhand smoke, the majority of legislators believed that passive smoke is harmful to

Table 2. Average opinions about tobacco policies: Selected items, both rounds

Item	First round (n = 116)			Second round (n = 115)		
	Mean	SD	% Positive	Mean	SD	% Positive
Reliability Items						
More jobs lost to imports than anti-tobacco legislation	2.8	0.6	67.0 ^a			
Nicotine is addictive	3.3	0.6	93.1 ^a			
Secondhand smoke related to children's health problems	2.9	0.7	74.1 ^a			
No reduction in business profits if smoke-free	2.7	0.6	66.4 ^a			
Desirability Items						
Improve Kentucky agricultural infrastructure	3.4	0.6	94.8 ^a			
Strengthen youth-access laws	3.1	0.9	72.2	3.2	0.8	80.9
Local control for youth access	2.6	0.8	54.3	2.6	0.8	50.9
Restrict workplace smoking	3.0	0.8	78.4 ^a			
Restrict smoking in restaurants	2.5	0.8	44.8	2.7	0.8	53.9
Restrict tobacco promotion items to children	2.8	0.8	62.9 ^a			
Increase availability of smoking cessation	2.9	0.7	74.1 ^a			
Raise cigarette tax to curb teen smoking	2.5	0.8	45.7	2.5	0.7	46.1
Increase cigarette tax with inflation	2.6	0.8	56.9	2.7	0.7	59.1
Feasibility Items						
Low interest loans for farm diversification	2.6	0.7	49.1	3.0	0.7	81.7
Develop regional price support for tobacco	3.0	0.7	75.9 ^a			
Likely to adopt local control for youth access	2.1	0.6	19.8 ^a			
Likely to restrict workplace smoking	2.2	0.6	25.9 ^a			
Ban tobacco use on school property and all school events	2.3	0.7	33.6 ^a			
Restrict point-of-sale advertising	2.5	0.6	48.3	2.5	0.7	47.8

^a Agreement, as determined by interquartile deviation ≤ 1.00 .

Note: % positive includes responses to "certainly reliable" or "reliable," "very desirable" or "desirable," and "very likely" or "likely."

children, and that businesses would not experience reductions in profits if they adopted smoke-free policies. Almost two thirds (64.4%) believed that teenagers were influenced to use tobacco more by peer pressure than by tobacco advertising. Three fourths (75.6%) of the legislators agreed that smoking is responsible for more than \$100 million in Medicaid costs each year in Kentucky.

With regard to the desirability and feasibility of tobacco farming policies, the legislators were in agreement that Kentucky should improve the infrastructure for marketing agricultural commodities, and 87.9% favored farm-diversification efforts. Similarly, 64.6% agreed that it was likely the General Assembly would pass laws to improve agricultural infrastructure. At the second round, there was strong agreement that the General Assembly was likely to provide low-interest loans for farm diversification. Over three fourths of the members interviewed thought they would pass a law to develop a regional price support system if the federal system were dismantled.

Opinions about the desirability and feasibility of tobacco control policies varied among legislators. Although the lawmakers were supportive of strengthening the youth-access laws, 67.8% did not support licensure of tobacco retailers, and 67.3% thought it unlikely that the General Assembly would suspend the licenses of retailers who violated youth-access laws. Although over one half believed that the state should allow local governments to pass stricter laws to curb underage smoking, less than one fourth thought the state was

likely to permit local control of youth-access laws. Similarly, the legislators agreed that the state should restrict smoking in the workplace and in places frequented by children (77.6%), but they thought it *unlikely* that the General Assembly would pass laws to restrict smoking in workplaces or on school property. Issues of tobacco marketing and advertising generally elicited unfavorable responses. Except for prohibiting the distribution of tobacco promotional items to youth, legislators thought it unlikely that they would pass legislation limiting tobacco advertising or marketing. Legislators agreed that smoking-cessation programs should be more available. In fact, at second round 83.5% of the legislators thought Kentucky should expand its Medicaid formulary to include smoking-cessation treatment.

The lawmakers were not in agreement about the desirability of raising the cigarette tax to curb teen tobacco use, although over one half thought that the state should increase the tax to keep up with inflation. At first round, 88.8% of the legislators thought it unlikely that the General Assembly would increase the cigarette tax by 3¢ a pack, even if an increase were earmarked for farm diversification (68.1% unlikely), agricultural infrastructure (64.6% unlikely), youth prevention (74.7% unlikely), or health insurance for children (79.4% unlikely). Although 66.1% of the legislators agreed that all tobacco products including smokeless tobacco should be taxed at the same rate, 75.8% thought it unlikely that the state would impose a tax on smokeless tobacco products.

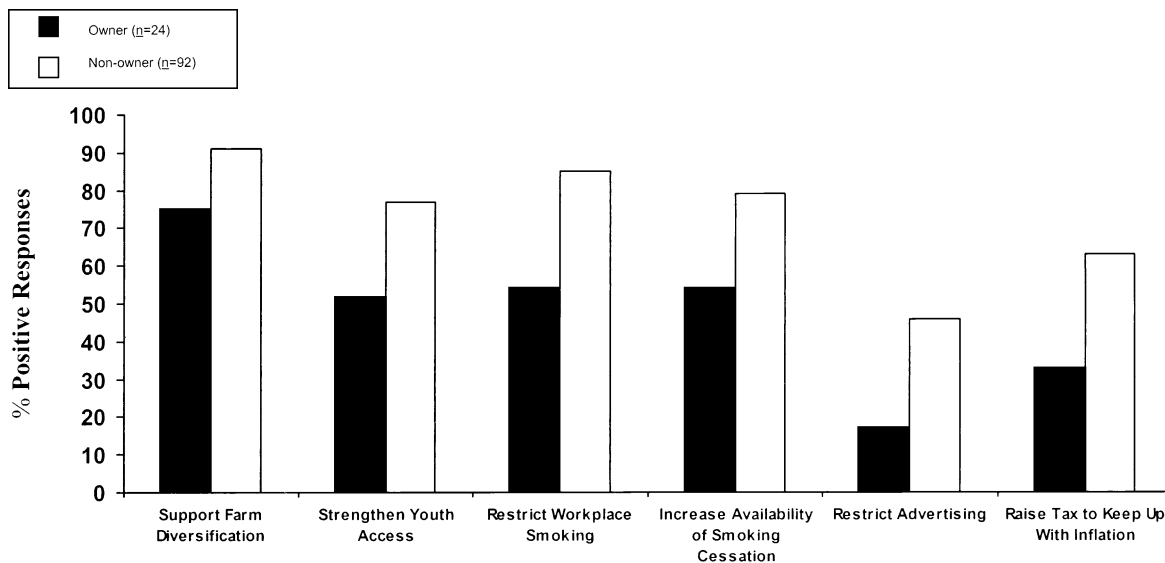


Figure 1. Significant associations ($P < 0.05$) between current tobacco allotment ownership and selected first-round items.

The second round of interviews explored the issue of raising the cigarette tax by asking how much the General Assembly could realistically raise the tax. Almost two thirds (64.3%) of the legislators interviewed thought that no increase was possible. Of the 40 legislators who thought there could be some increase, 57.5% thought Kentucky could raise the tax by 2¢ to 3¢. The 40 legislators who thought a tax increase was possible were more likely to support local option for youth access, restrict indoor smoking, increase the availability of smoking-cessation programs, and restrict tobacco marketing/advertising compared to those who did not think the cigarette tax could be raised (Fisher's exact test, $P < 0.05$ in each case).

As mentioned, there were discrepancies between what tobacco control policies the legislators thought were *desirable* and which were *feasible*. The majority of the General Assembly thought they should pass certain tobacco control laws, but probably would not do so in three areas: (1) permitting local option for counties and cities to enact stronger tobacco control laws, (2) restricting smoking in the workplace, and (3) taxing smokeless tobacco at the same rate as cigarettes. Many legislators explained these contradictions by referring to one of several themes. For example, some legislators felt that local option would be a legal nightmare if each local jurisdiction had its own tobacco control laws, considering that Kentucky has 120 counties, plus about 3,000 cities or towns. Other members compared tobacco control to gun control, believing it will not work unless it is consistent across the state. Another theme was that government-mandated restrictions on workplace smoking would violate Kentucky's strong tradition of minimizing government regulation and maximizing rights of the individual. A final theme was that Kentucky's current political climate is intensely hostile

to any tax increases and new forms of taxation. For each of these issues, many legislators also indicated that tobacco manufacturers and farm groups used their political influence to sway members from voting as they wished to vote. A minor theme emerged when several legislators said that smokeless tobacco is perceived to be less harmful than cigarettes because it does not produce effects comparable to secondhand smoke.

Views about the proposed national tobacco settlement.

At first round, most of the lawmakers thought Kentucky should (92.2% in favor) and would (81.6% likely or very likely) claim its share of Medicaid reimbursement from any national settlement fund. At second round, 92.1% agreed that the state should ensure post-settlement economic development in tobacco-dependent counties, but 63.1% thought it unlikely that Kentucky would help finance a voluntary buy-out of tobacco allotments. Fifty-nine percent thought that even if the national settlement collapsed, the state attorney general should not sue tobacco companies to recover Medicaid costs. Similarly, 69.5% of the members thought it unlikely that the General Assembly would support the attorney general for taking such an action. However, 84.3% agreed that it was likely Kentucky would use money recovered from Medicaid costs to protect farmers, given a hypothetical state lawsuit against the tobacco companies.

Differences by tobacco allotment ownership. Tobacco allotment owners ($n = 24$) and non-owners ($n = 92$) differed on their support for a variety of tobacco farming and tobacco control policies at first round (see Figure 1). The legislators who owned tobacco allotments were less likely to support farm diversification and agricultural infrastructure policies than non-owners. The tobacco allotment owners also were less likely

Table 3. Summary of first- and second-round comparisons using McNemar's test ($n = 115$)

Item	% unchanged (n)	% More Positive (n)	% More Negative (n)	McNemar χ^2
Desirability Items				
Grow hemp as supplemented crop	64.0 (71)	14.4 (16)	21.6 (24)	1.5 NS
Stabilize tobacco prices if federal price supports are abolished	40.7 (46)	14.2 (16)	45.1 (51)	20.2 ^a
Strengthen youth-access laws	47.4 (54)	30.7 (35)	21.9 (25)	0.8 NS
Local control for youth access	52.6 (60)	21.1 (24)	26.3 (30)	27.8 ^a
Restrict smoking in restaurants	60.0 (69)	27.8 (32)	12.2 (14)	5.6 ^b
Raise cigarette tax to curb youth smoking	56.5 (65)	22.6 (26)	20.9 (24)	<.01 NS
Raise cigarette tax to keep up with inflation	60.9 (70)	21.7 (25)	17.4 (20)	0.9 NS
Feasibility Items				
Low-interest loans for farm diversification	40.0 (46)	49.6 (57)	10.4 (12)	23.1 ^a
Require tobacco companies to contribute funds for farm diversification	53.0 (61)	25.2 (29)	21.7 (25)	1.3 NS
Penalize store owners who sell to minors	49.6 (57)	33.9 (39)	16.5 (19)	5.3 ^b
Restrict point-of-sale advertising	52.2 (60)	27.0 (31)	20.9 (24)	1.2 NS

^a $p \leq 0.001$ ^b $p \leq 0.05$

NS = not significant.

to think that the state should strengthen its youth-access laws or restrict workplace smoking as compared to the non-owners. The legislators who owned tobacco allotments were less likely to believe that secondhand smoke was harmful and were more skeptical of studies showing no profit reductions when businesses go smoke-free. The tobacco allotment owners also were less likely to support increasing the availability of smoking-cessation programs and restricting tobacco advertising. Likewise, the tobacco allotment owners were less likely to support cigarette tax increases than the non-owners, even if funds were earmarked for farm diversification and agricultural infrastructure. Almost all (95.6%) the nonowners thought Kentucky should take action to ensure economic development in the event of a national settlement, as compared to 79.2% of the tobacco allotment owners (Fisher's exact test, $P = 0.02$).

Differences by party affiliation. Opinions differed by party regarding the addictive nature of nicotine, tobacco advertising policy, cigarette excise taxes, and litigation. The Democrats were more likely to be certain that nicotine was addictive than were the Republican lawmakers (Democrats, 46.5%; Republicans, 22.2%; Fisher's exact test, $P = 0.02$). The Democrats were more likely to support advertising restrictions (Democrats, 49.3%; Republicans, 24.4%) and limits on distribution of promotional items (Democrats, 70.4%; Republicans, 51.1%) than were the Republicans (chi-square test, $P = 0.01$, $P = 0.04$, respectively). Likewise, the Democrats were more likely than the Republicans to consider cigarette tax increases a "very desirable" way to curb youth smoking (Democrats, 18.3%; Republicans, 2.2%; Fisher's exact test, $P = 0.01$). The Democrats were more supportive of the state bringing suit against the tobacco companies (Democrats, 51.4%;

Republicans, 24.4%) and taking action to ensure economic development in the event of a national tobacco settlement (Democrats, 97.1%; Republicans, 84.4%) than were the Republicans (Fisher's exact test, $P = 0.006$, $P = 0.03$, respectively). There was no association between tobacco allotment ownership and party affiliation.

Degree of shift from first to second round. Of the 11 interview items common to both rounds, five demonstrated a significant shift from the first to the second round (see Table 3). On three of the five items, the legislators became more positive from the first to the second round: They were more likely to think the General Assembly would provide low-interest loans for farm diversification, impose stiff civil penalties for store owners who sell tobacco products to minors, and favor smoking restrictions in restaurants. The legislators became more negative toward state stabilization of tobacco prices if federal price supports are abolished, as well as the desirability of local option for youth-access laws, although this last difference was less striking.

Discussion

For states that grow tobacco, economic as well as cultural dependence on the product influences politics and the formation of policy. Although North Carolina has more tobacco acreage, Kentucky ranks first in the number and percent of farms that grow tobacco.¹⁸ In Kentucky, the average farm is only 159 acres compared to the national average of 470 acres; in parts of the state, few of these acres may be tillable due to Kentucky's topography. In 1996, the average gross income from tobacco in Kentucky was \$3,805/acre compared to \$366/acre for corn.¹ This combination of factors explains why income from tobacco is critical to the

small family farmer and why tobacco is a part of the social fabric in many Kentucky farm communities. In addition, tobacco manufacturers located in Kentucky contribute to the job and tax base and make philanthropic contributions to civic organizations. Due to the economic and cultural influences of tobacco, Kentucky's public health community has not aggressively addressed tobacco control issues. More recently, tobacco control advocates in Kentucky have come to view the reduction of economic and cultural dependence on tobacco as a public health strategy.

Given that Kentucky has a long tradition of economic and cultural dependence on tobacco, it is noteworthy that the lawmakers interviewed were highly supportive of policies promoting farm diversification and agricultural infrastructure to lessen the state's dependence on tobacco. Support for low-interest loans for farm diversification and the creation of a regional price support system to stabilize tobacco prices reflects interest in pro-health tobacco farming policies.

It is encouraging that there was support for several key elements of tobacco control policy: stronger youth-access laws, restrictions on indoor smoking, limits on tobacco promotions to children, and increased availability of smoking-cessation programs. Although there was not agreement at either round that Kentucky should raise the cigarette tax to curb teen smoking, 59% of the lawmakers agreed at second round that the tax should be increased to keep up with inflation. However, they rated the likelihood of raising the state excise tax as doubtful even if the funds were earmarked for farm diversification and agricultural infrastructure. There were 40 legislators, however, who were favorable toward a small tax increase and who supported many tobacco control policies. These 40 members may be potential tobacco control allies.

It is not surprising that the lawmakers had conflicting opinions about what tobacco control policies were desirable and which were likely to be passed by the Kentucky General Assembly. The fact that the lawmakers cited the influence of tobacco interests as a major reason for this discrepancy was not unexpected. The differences in opinions between tobacco allotment owners and non-owners highlight the influence of tobacco on state policy. Not only did the legislators who own tobacco allotment have financial ties to tobacco, they also were more likely to use tobacco products.

As the debate over national tobacco legislation escalates and public disclosures of tobacco company documents continue, Kentucky tobacco allotment owners face uncertainty regarding the future of tobacco. Most likely due to their personal interests in tobacco, the legislators who owned tobacco allotments were less likely to think the state should support farm diversification efforts than the non-owners. The fact that the legislators who owned tobacco allotments were less likely to support tobacco control or farming policies

provides a challenge for tobacco control advocates in tobacco-growing states and for farmers who are interested in diversification. In a 1998 survey of 400 Kentucky tobacco farmers, 47% were interested in trying additional nontobacco, on-farm activities.¹⁹ However, the majority cited lack of quality labor, lack of nearby processing plants, and no place to sell new products as barriers to diversifying their farm enterprises. The findings reported in this study suggest that legislators who own allotments may be unlikely to pass laws to reduce these barriers to farm diversification.

Consistent with other studies,^{7,20} we found that the Democrats interviewed were more supportive of tobacco advertising and marketing restrictions and cigarette tax increases than were the Republican lawmakers. The Democrats also were more likely to believe that nicotine is addictive. The Democrats were more likely to support the state attorney general in bringing suit against tobacco companies. Party affiliation was not related to opinions on tobacco farming, youth-access, clean indoor air, or smoking-cessation policies. These findings suggest that the role party affiliation plays in predicting support for tobacco control in Kentucky varies according to the specific issue.

The fact that a shift toward consensus on tobacco policy was achieved in the second round for 45% of the interview items common to both rounds reflects that the policy Delphi method may be a useful tool in health policy development. The lawmakers became more positive toward policies that would lessen the state's dependence on tobacco, discourage the sale of tobacco products to minors, and promote clean indoor air in restaurants. Shifts in opinion occurred in a negative direction as well. The shift in opinion toward stabilizing tobacco prices given the collapse of the federal price support system may have been due to changes in the national tobacco settlement situation. The decline in support for local option may have been the result of an aggressive statewide media campaign by the tobacco control coalition blaming state government for the pre-emptive state youth access law. This campaign unleashed pro-tobacco lobbying, which worked against the re-establishment of local control for youth access.

The changing and dynamic nature of any national tobacco legislation makes interpretation of opinions on the proposed national settlement difficult. These findings reflect Kentucky lawmakers' concerns for rural economic development in the event of national tobacco legislation. However, the legislators did not support the Kentucky Attorney General bringing suit against tobacco companies in order to pay for the economic development of rural communities.

In summary, the Kentucky lawmakers studied were highly supportive of policies that would lessen the state's dependence on tobacco. They also were more favorable toward tobacco control policies than expected. However, there were discrepancies between

what tobacco control policies were thought to be desirable and which policies were realistic. The influence of tobacco interests was a possible explanation for this disparity. Financial ties to tobacco (i.e., tobacco allotment ownership) were associated with less support for tobacco control and pro-health tobacco farming policies. The policy Delphi method has the potential for shifting opinions about tobacco control and tobacco farming policies among state legislators. This same method could be used with other key stakeholders such as farm leaders and public health officials. Other states, particularly those that produce tobacco, may find the policy Delphi process useful in building consensus on tobacco policy among decision-makers. The findings of this study identify opportunities for changing public health policy in the most tobacco-dependent state in the United States.

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