

Proposition EE: Taxes on Nicotine Products

1 **Proposition EE, if approved, would:**

- 2 • increase taxes on cigarettes and tobacco products;
- 3 • create a new tax on nicotine products; and
- 4 • distribute the new revenue to expanded preschool programs, as well as to
- 5 K-12 education, rural schools, affordable housing, eviction assistance,
- 6 tobacco education, and health care.

7 **What Your Vote Means**

YES

A “yes” vote increases taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products, and creates a new tax on nicotine products, including vaping products. The new tax revenue will be spent on education, housing, tobacco prevention, health care, and preschool.

NO

A “no” vote means taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products will stay the same, and there will be no new taxes on nicotine or vaping products.

1 **Summary and Analysis for Proposition EE**

2 **Why is Proposition EE on the ballot?**

3 Earlier this year, the state legislature passed a law to raise taxes on cigarettes and
 4 tobacco products, create a state tax on nicotine products, and modify the regulation of
 5 these products. The new law takes effect only if Proposition EE is approved by voters,
 6 as all tax increases require voter approval under the Colorado Constitution. This
 7 analysis discusses the changes that will occur if Proposition EE passes.

8 **How are cigarettes, other tobacco products, and nicotine products currently**
 9 **taxed?**

10 Cigarettes are currently taxed at 4.2¢ per cigarette, which is 84¢ per pack of
 11 20 cigarettes. Tobacco products include chewing tobacco, cigars, and snuff and are
 12 currently taxed at 40 percent of the manufacturer’s list price, which is the price at
 13 which a manufacturer sells the product to a distributor. Nicotine products, which
 14 include vaping products, are not currently subject to a cigarette or tobacco tax. All
 15 three products are currently subject to the state sales tax.

16 Cigarette and tobacco taxes are required to be paid by the distributor that first
 17 receives products in the state, which may include local manufacturers or out-of-state
 18 retailers that sell to Colorado consumers online. The business pays taxes to the
 19 state, but may keep a portion of the tax as compensation for work associated with
 20 filing taxes.

21 **Current revenue distributions.** Current cigarette and tobacco tax revenue is
 22 distributed to a variety of health care, tobacco education, and disease prevention
 23 programs, as well as for general state programs and services.

24 **How does Proposition EE change taxes on those products?**

25 Proposition EE raises taxes on cigarettes and tobacco products, and establishes a
 26 new tax on nicotine products. The new taxes increase incrementally until they are
 27 fully phased in during 2027. Table 1 lists the current tax rates and the new rates
 28 under the measure. The new revenue is exempt from constitutional spending limits.

29 **Table 1**
 30 **Changes to Cigarette and Tobacco and Nicotine Products Taxes**

Product	Current Tax Rates	New Rates Under Proposition EE*							Tax Rate Increase 2021 to 2027
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	
Cigarettes <i>Tax per pack</i>	\$0.84	\$1.94	\$1.94	\$1.94	\$2.24	\$2.24	\$2.24	\$2.64	\$1.80
Tobacco Product <i>Percent of price**</i>	40%	50%	50%	50%	56%	56%	56%	62%	22%
Nicotine Products <i>Percent of price**</i>	None	30%	35%	50%	56%	56%	56%	62%	62%

31 *Rate increases begin January 1, except in 2024 and 2027, when rate increases begin July 1.

32 **Manufacturer’s list price.

1 If approved, the measure also:

- 2 • sets tax rates for modified risk tobacco products at half the new tax rate for
3 regular products. A modified risk tobacco product is a federal designation for a
4 tobacco product that poses lower health risks when compared to existing
5 commercial products such as cigarettes. Currently, there is only one type of
6 product that has received this designation for sale nationwide.

- 7 • establishes a minimum tax for moist snuff products at \$1.48 per 1.2 ounce
8 container, increasing to \$2.26 by 2027-28. Moist snuff is a type of cut,
9 smokeless tobacco that can be loose or pouched and is intended to be placed in
10 the mouth rather than sniffed;

- 11 • sets a minimum after-tax price of cigarettes for consumers at \$7.00 per pack
12 beginning in January 2021, and \$7.50 per pack beginning in July 2024; and

- 13 • reduces the portion of the taxes that distributors may keep as compensation for
14 the work associated with filing taxes from 4.0 percent to 0.4 percent for cigarette
15 distributors, from 3.33 percent to 1.6 percent for tobacco distributors, and sets
16 this rate at 1.1 percent for nicotine distributors.

17 **Are vaping products taxed under Proposition EE?**

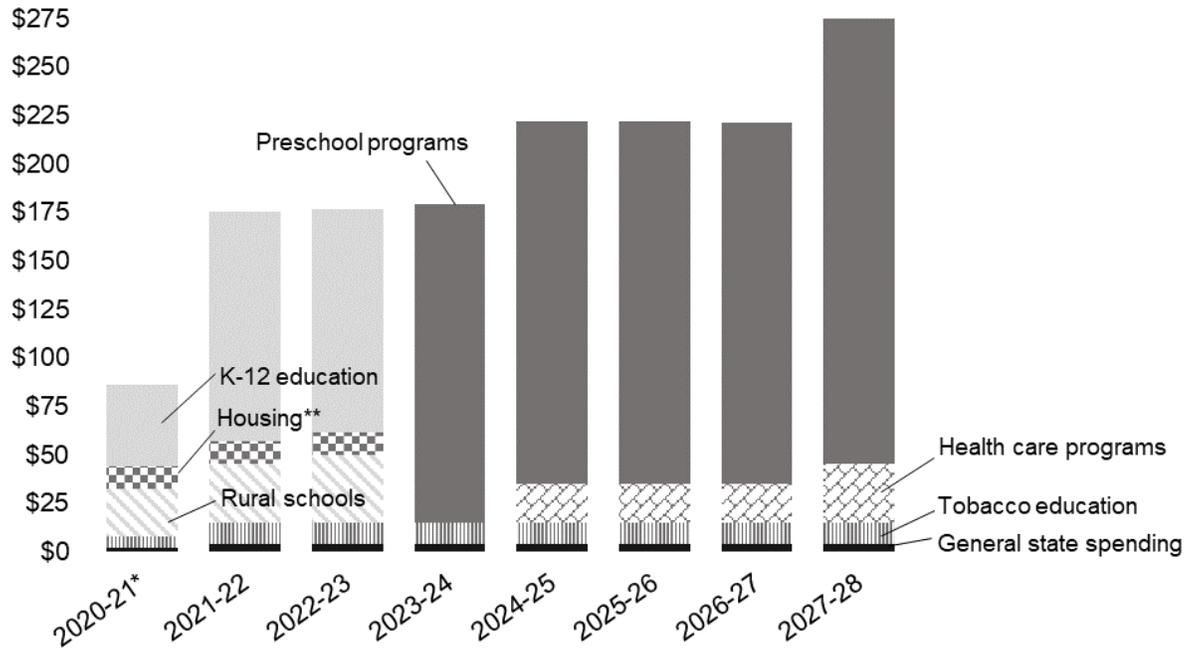
18 Yes, vaping products that contain liquid nicotine are subject to the nicotine tax
19 established by Proposition EE. Vaping products and devices that do not contain
20 nicotine are not subject to the tax. Vaping products are not eligible for the lower tax
21 rates for modified risk tobacco products, even if they are approved for this
22 designation by the federal government.

23 **How will the new tax revenue be spent?**

24 Proposition EE is expected to generate up to \$176.6 million in cigarette, tobacco,
25 and nicotine tax revenue in budget year 2021-2022, the first full year the measure
26 will be in effect, and up to \$274.9 million beginning in budget year 2027-28 when the
27 new tax rates are fully phased in. Figure 1 shows the programs that will receive
28 funding as the new tax rates are phased in through budget year 2027-28. Programs
29 funded in budget year 2027-28 will continue to receive funding in future years.

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2
3

Figure 1
Distributions of New Tax Revenue
Millions of dollars, by budget year



4 * Half-year impact.
5 ** Includes housing development and eviction legal assistance.

6 As shown in the above figure, the measure will provide funding for the following
7 programs:

- 8 • **K-12 education.** In the first three years, any revenue not allocated to other
9 programs will be available for K-12 education funding, which may include school
10 finance funding to school districts, including charter schools, as well as other
11 education programs.
- 12 • **Rural schools.** Of the money allocated for rural schools in the first three years,
13 55 percent goes to rural school districts with between 1,000 and 6,500 students,
14 and 45 percent goes to rural school districts with fewer than 1,000 students. The
15 funding is allocated on a per-student basis.
- 16 • **Housing development.** In the first three years, funding will be allocated as
17 grants or loans to buy, renovate, and construct houses, or provide rental
18 assistance, in an effort to increase the supply of affordable housing. Of the
19 amount allocated for this purpose, \$5.0 million must be used in rural areas.
- 20 • **Eviction legal assistance.** Funding for this purpose is allocated in the first
21 three years and will be awarded to organizations that provide legal assistance to
22 low-income clients at risk of eviction.
- 23 • **Health care programs.** Funding allocated for health care programs will be used
24 for Medicaid, primary care, tobacco use prevention, children’s health and a
25 variety of other health care programs that currently receive cigarette and tobacco
26 tax revenue.

- 1 • **General state spending.** Of the amount allocated for this purpose, 27 percent
2 must be distributed to local governments, and the remainder used for general
3 state spending, which may include education, transportation, and health care,
4 and will be determined by the state legislature. A portion of the additional sales
5 tax revenue from the minimum cigarette price is also used for general state
6 spending.
- 7 • **Tobacco education programs.** Money allocated for this purpose is used for
8 grants for community-based and statewide programs to reduce tobacco use by
9 youth, encourage cessation, and reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.
- 10
11 • **Preschool programs.** Proposition EE provides funding for expanded preschool,
12 including at least ten hours per week of free preschool to every child in their final
13 year before kindergarten. A portion of the additional sales tax revenue from the
14 minimum cigarette price is also used for this purpose.

15 **How would preschool availability and funding change?**

16 Currently, the Colorado Preschool Program funds 29,360 half-day preschool slots for
17 three- and four-year old children who are from low-income families, in need of
18 language development, or who meet certain criteria indicating they may be in danger
19 of falling behind in school. About 9,000 low-income students also have access to
20 preschool through federal Head Start programs. The measure requires that the new
21 funding be used to offer at least 10 hours per week of free preschool to every child in
22 their final year before kindergarten. This is expected to begin in the 2023-24 school
23 year. Any remaining revenue must be used to expand preschool opportunities for
24 low-income families and children at risk of not being ready for kindergarten.

For information on those issue committees that support or oppose the measures on the ballot at the November 3, 2020, election, go to the Colorado Secretary of State's elections center web site hyperlink for ballot and initiative information:

<http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Initiatives/InitiativesHome.html>

25 **Arguments For Proposition EE**

- 26 1) Cigarettes, tobacco, and nicotine products are addictive and have negative
27 health impacts, which can include cancer and heart and lung disease. Tax
28 increases usually result in higher prices, which deter smoking and tobacco use,
29 especially among youth and young adults. Colorado has one of the lowest tax
30 rates on cigarettes and tobacco products, and no tax on vaping products, while
31 also having one of the highest rates of youth vaping in the country. A tax on
32 vaping products could decrease consumption while funding health care and
33 tobacco education and prevention programs.
- 34 2) Proposition EE provides needed funding for education. The impacts of the
35 COVID-19 pandemic on the state budget have resulted in a 10 percent decrease
36 in the state share of public school funding for the 2020-21 school year. Additional
37 federal funding has helped lessen the impact of this state budget cut in 2020;
38 however, it is not likely going to be available next year and further cuts are
39 expected. The measure provides vital funding for schools as the economy

1 recovers, and additional assistance for small rural districts that are
2 disproportionately impacted by state funding cuts.

3 3) Providing access to free preschool gives all children the same foundation before
4 entering kindergarten. Currently, half of Colorado three- and-four-year-olds do
5 not attend any type of preschool. High quality preschool is shown to improve
6 educational, economic, and health outcomes throughout a child's life, including
7 higher wages, higher graduation rates, and fewer criminal convictions. Access to
8 preschool also supports working parents by giving them the option to enroll their
9 children in up to ten hours per week at no cost.

10 **Arguments Against Proposition EE**

11 1) Increasing taxes on cigarette, tobacco, and nicotine products imposes a financial
12 burden on people who choose to consume them, particularly low-income users.
13 Because these products are addictive, users may continue to purchase them
14 even after a tax increase. In addition, vaping products are used by many as a
15 way to quit using traditional cigarettes. Youth vaping should be addressed
16 through enforcement of existing age restrictions and additional education and
17 prevention, not through raising taxes on a product that some use as a cessation
18 device.

19 2) Raising taxes and establishing a minimum purchase price hurts business
20 owners. This is particularly true in areas of the state where local governments
21 have already imposed cigarette, tobacco, and nicotine taxes. Businesses selling
22 these products may see a decline in sales, which can be particularly harmful for
23 small, local businesses at a time when many are already struggling. Private
24 businesses and market competition are best suited to determine the prices at
25 which products are bought and sold.

26 3) The state should not be dependent on tax revenue from a specific, addictive
27 product to fund schools, preschool, and other state services. Once Proposition
28 EE is fully phased in, revenue from this tax is likely to decline over time as the
29 increased price results in fewer products being purchased. At the same time,
30 preschool funding needs are likely to grow. A tax intended to decrease
31 consumption is not a funding source on which the state should rely.

32 **Estimate of Fiscal Impact for Proposition EE**

33 **State revenue.** Proposition EE will increase state revenue from cigarette, tobacco
34 product, and nicotine product taxes by \$87 million in state budget year 2020-21 and
35 \$176 million in state budget year 2021-22, the first full year under the measure. The
36 amount of new revenue will increase as the measure is phased in, with \$276 million
37 expected to be generated in state budget year 2027-28.

38 In addition, the measure will also increase state revenue from sales taxes by
39 \$0.8 million in state budget year 2020-21 and by \$1.5 million in state budget year
40 2021-22, the first full year under the measure. The amount of additional sales tax
41 revenue will decline as the measure is phased in, with no new sales tax revenue
42 expected in state budget year 2027-28.

1 **State spending.** Proposition EE will increase state spending by \$87 million in state
2 budget year 2020-21 and by \$177 million in state budget year 2021-22. As the
3 measure is phased in, state spending will increase, with \$276 million expected to be
4 spent in state budget year 2027-28. Spending includes the amounts identified in
5 Figure 1 for education, housing, preschool, tobacco and nicotine education and
6 cessation programs and other programs, as well as costs for administrative and
7 auditing purposes.

8 **Taxpayer impacts.** Proposition EE is expected to increase taxes paid by an
9 average of \$38 per Colorado adult in state budget year 2021-22, and \$53 per
10 Colorado adult in budget year 2027-28; however, the direct tax impact applies only to
11 people who consume cigarette, tobacco products, and/or nicotine products. If the
12 percentage of adult smokers remains constant at 14.6 percent, the measure is
13 expected to increase the taxes paid by cigarette smokers by an average of \$221 in
14 state budget year 2021-22 and by \$289 in state budget year 2027-28.