

Oregon rejects cigarette tax hike

by UPI

PORTLAND, Ore. -- Oregonians shook off a \$12 million advertising blitz by tobacco companies and tax opponents and turned down an 85-cent-a-pack cigarette tax hike Tuesday. Election officials said the measure was going down to defeat by a margin of about 542,000 to 368,000, or about 60 percent to 40 percent, The (Portland) Oregonian reported. Revenues from the cigarette tax hike was to have gone to providing coverage for uninsured children and other healthcare needs. Supporters of the measure blamed the loss on the advertising by opponents, the most spent on a campaign in state history, the newspaper said. "I think that this is just a battle in a long war. I think that -- and I still believe deeply -- that Oregonians care about children. They want to provide children with healthcare," said Gov. Ted Kulongoski. Opponents countered that voters weren't convinced a new program was needed and they didn't like the idea of inserting a tax measure in the constitution. "The primary reason is there's not an appetite out there for more taxes. That is a big issue," said Russ Walker, Oregon director of the anti-tax group FreedomWorks.

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