

The States of Research

How Texas, Florida, and maybe also California will act as major sponsors of cancer science

A campaign battle now rages in California over Proposition 29, a ballot measure that would increase cigarette taxes by \$1 per pack. Opponents, backed by cigarette companies, don't want taxes raised, regardless of the cause. Supporters—largely nonsmokers—say a higher cigarette tax will discourage young people from starting a dangerous habit.

The surcharge would also raise hundreds of millions of dollars a year for cancer research—creating by far the largest state-based fund in the country—and building on a trend started in other states, such as Florida and Texas.

State spending on cancer research can accomplish 3 main goals, supporters say:

- Such funding can help compensate for belt-tightening at the federal level, which has made research grants much harder to win.
- It can help foster academic and corporate innovation, attract federal funding, and create jobs. In Texas, every dollar invested in cancer research is projected to return \$4.78 in economic gains.
- Because it's usually tied to smoking cessation and/or screening programs, state funding can also save lives locally by discouraging teens from starting to smoke, and catching certain cancers early.

Texas Bets Big

Grant	Sum awarded (\$ million)	Purpose
Statewide Clinical Trials Network of Texas, Austin	25.2	Establish a shared network of clinical trial information
Houston-area incubator, collaboration between Rice University and MD Anderson Cancer Center	20.0	Link cancer researchers with entrepreneurs
Cell Medica, location not announced	15.6	Open office for immunotherapy company from United Kingdom
Caliber Biotherapeutics, College Station	12.8	Monoclonal antibody program to treat leukemia and lymphoma
Peloton Therapeutics, Dallas	11.0	Form company building on research of Steven L. McKnight, PhD, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center

Here are the top 5 cancer research projects funded to date by the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas. Separately, awards for recruitment of investigators from outside the state will total more than \$100 million.

Additionally, there's a psychological benefit to staying local. "State legislatures and governments are hearing from their constituents that there are some things that need to be done for the public good right here in my state," says Mary Woolley, president and CEO of Research!America, a non-profit alliance in Alexandria, VA, that works to make health research a higher national priority.

TARGETING TUMORS IN TEXAS

In 2007, Texas voters authorized a plan to spend \$300 million a year for 10 years on cancer prevention, research, and treatment commercialization. So far, the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), which is governed by an 11-member board and relies upon peer-review recommendations from 200 scientists and cancer experts from outside the state, has awarded more than \$670 million.

That sum includes \$20 million to an incubator of translational research, a joint venture between Rice University's BioScience Research Collaborative and The University of Texas MD Anderson Comprehensive Cancer Center (both in Houston), and \$23 million to 2 companies involved in lymphoma drug development. It also provides more than \$100 million to recruit cancer researchers to Texas.

It makes particular sense for Texas to invest in science, Woolley adds, because the state draws relatively few research dollars from the federal government. Texas is the second-most populous state, but is 6th in NIH funding.

CPRIT is funded through bonds, like a highway or other infrastructure project, Executive Director Bill Gimson says. "Just as you expect a highway to last for 30 years, we expect that research to last 20 to 30 years, and we expect that research to give us returns."

BEATING BACK TOBACCO

In California, "the ballot box is one of the most effective weapons at our disposal," says Katherine McLane, senior director for communications for the Lance Armstrong Foundation in Austin, TX, which helped CPRIT win approval in Texas and has pledged \$1.5 million in support of California's Proposition 29.

Ernie Bodai, MD, director of breast surgical services at Kaiser Permanente in Sacramento and an active member of the campaign, notes that California levies only 87 cents per package of cigarettes.

The measure would provide roughly \$735 million in the first year, 60% of which would be dedicated to providing grants and loans to support cancer research and diagnosis.

Florida's effort is more modest than the other two, and because it depends on the general fund, it has been trimmed during the state's fiscal crisis. The H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute in Tampa has received state funding since its conception, says Jamie Wilson, the center's vice president for government relations. Though funding has been cut significantly, the center still expects to receive about \$5 million from the state, as well as 1.47% of the cigarette tax this year and 2.75% next year, he says. —Karen Weintraub ■