

## **PROPOSITION 2 MERITS SUPPORT**

*Deseret News. Salt Lake City, Utah: November 3, 2000. Pg. A10*

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Proposition 2 would provide a way to use settlement funds from the tobacco lawsuit to fight cigarette use among the young, and it also would provide a trust fund that would benefit Utahns after terms of the settlement have been met. That sounds like an intelligent approach to a windfall that will come Utah's way by virtue of participating in a nationwide suit against tobacco companies.

Specifically, the proposition would amend the Utah Constitution to establish a permanent state trust fund for the majority of the tobacco settlement money. Fifty percent of all money received by the state due to the settlement would be deposited into this fund, with that amount increasing to 60 percent on July 1, 2003.

Opponents charge that passage of Proposition 2 would not provide enough funding to adequately address the need for smoking prevention and cessation. The question is how much is "adequate?"

Under the terms of the nationwide settlement, tobacco companies have agreed to pay \$206 billion over the next 25 years to the states that filed suits. Utah's portion will be approximately \$900 million during that 25-year time period.

Surely, all \$900 million is not needed to effectively fight tobacco use. The state could find more ways to help children than by simply using all of the money on anti-smoking measures. As important as it is to keep children away from cigarettes, the amount of the settlement is way more than what would be needed for an effective prevention and cessation program.

The advantage of a permanent trust is that the balance would continue to grow until it produces income from investments that are in excess of the tobacco payments themselves.

The unknown factor is the state of the nation's economy over the next 25 years. Many things could happen. Tobacco companies could go bankrupt, or the federal government and outside parties could lay claim to some of the money. For that reason, the tobacco settlement funds need to be treated as one-time money.

Setting up a permanent trust fund is the best way to deal with whatever money Utah receives from the tobacco settlement. And that's why Proposition 2 merits a "Yes" vote on Nov. 7.