



HISTORY OF AMENDMENT 35

In July 2003:

- Colorado was facing a healthcare crisis with more than 750,000 uninsured people
- Tobacco use was exacerbating the problem and causing more than 4,000 deaths every year
- The state's tobacco tax rate was among the lowest in the nation

Recognizing the stark reality of the situation, a group of over 30 health care experts, business leaders, policy analysts and advocates representing more than 20 statewide organizations came together to help find a solution. The conclusion was that tobacco use needed to be reduced and access to health care expanded. There was one strategy that would meet both goals at once – a higher tax on tobacco.

As tobacco becomes more expensive, tobacco use declines – especially among kids. That step alone would save lives. But raising the tobacco tax would also generate new revenue that could be earmarked to expand access to health care for Colorado families, to support community clinics and primary care providers across the state, to restore tobacco education and cessation programs and to fund prevention, detection and treatment of deadly diseases including heart and lung disease and cancer. Together these two outcomes of a tobacco tax increase would dramatically impact the overall health of the state.

From that Steering Committee of roughly 35 individuals grew a strong statewide coalition known as Citizens for a Healthier Colorado. ***The campaign coalition included more than 110 grassroots organizations from across the state.*** Volunteers in every corner of Colorado collected signatures to qualify the initiative for the ballot. They raised money and awareness. They hosted fundraisers and spoke at community group meetings. Their hard work led to the ultimate success of the initiative.

On November 2, 2004, Colorado voters passed Amendment 35 – the first statewide tax increase of any kind since TABOR was approved in 1992 – by more than 61%.

The core of that coalition remains united and committed to upholding the promises made to voters during the campaign.