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Kan. Governor Seeks Higher Sales, Tobacco Taxes

Kansas Gov. Mark Parkinson is proposing to raise the state sales tax and cigarette taxes to help balance the budget.

Parkinson outlined the proposals Monday night in his State of the State address.

Many legislators talked about additional cuts in state funding. Parkinson said cutting areas anymore would be irresponsible. Raising these two state taxes, he said, would be a better alternative.

The Democratic governor wants to raise the sales tax to 6.3 percent from the current 5.3 percent. The increase would be in place for three years. Parkinson says it would bring in about \$308 million a year in state revenue.

Parkinson is also proposing a permanent, 55-cent per-pack increase in the state tax on cigarettes. The Kansas tax is now 79 cents a pack. Parkinson wants to raise it to the national average of \$1.34 and says the increase would bring in about \$70 million a year.

Kansas is facing a projected revenue shortfall of nearly \$400 million for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Parkinson also outlines three policy initiatives he would like to see advance in the coming year. The first would be a public ban on smoking. The second, advancing the renewable energy policy. Last, creating a budget reserve to protect the state in future years.

Parkinson said he is still open to other suggestions. It is important, he said, we stay positive, and there are reasons to be optimistic.

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