



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

2009-10 Legislative Session

FISCAL NOTE

HOUSE BILL: 325

PRINTER'S NO: 3888

PRIME SPONSOR: (withdrawn)

FISCAL IMPACT SUMMARY	FY 2009/10	FY 2010/11
Revenue Increase/(Decrease):		
General Fund	\$0	\$281,780,000
Other Funds	\$0	See Analysis

OVERVIEW:

House Bill 325, Printer's Number 3888 amends the Tax Reform Code (Act No. 2 of 1971) providing for a sales and use tax exemption certificate to be furnished to volunteer firefighters' relief associations. The exemption certificates would be considered permanent. This bill also increases the cigarette tax, limits the sales tax vendor discount, imposes a tax on tobacco products, and imposes a severance tax.

This act would take effect as follows:

- Sections 204 (10), 227, and 237 (c) shall take effect in 60 days.
- Sections 1206, 1206.1, and 1216 shall take effect in 30 days.
- The remainder of this act shall take effect in 90 days.

ANALYSIS:

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Auditor General, Bureau of Firefighters' Relief Audits, there are 1,957 Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Associations (VFRA) in the commonwealth. This audit shows statewide average annual expenditures of more than \$45 million for equipment purchases by VFRAs. It is assumed that these equipment purchases are for taxable items. Therefore the adverse fiscal impact on the General Fund would be approximately \$2.72 million annually if purchases were exempted from the sales tax. This estimate could be understated to the extent that VFRAs purchase taxable office supplies; however that amount is unknown. The sales and use tax paid on such purchases is most likely a nominal amount.

House Bill 325 contains the following provisions related to revenue increases:

Sales and Use Tax Vendor Discount: This bill amends the discount which allows vendors to apply a one percent credit against the tax remitted to the Department of Revenue for timely filed returns. Each licensee would be allowed to claim a discount to be credited against up to \$500,000 of taxable sales reported on returns per year. This will be administered as a limited discount amount per return, based on the filing schedule of the licensee.

Tobacco Products: This bill creates a tax on other tobacco products at a rate of 30 percent on the wholesale purchase price charged to the retailer. This bill includes cigars in the tax on other tobacco products.

Severance Tax: This bill creates a tax on the extraction of natural gas within the Commonwealth at a rate of 8 percent of the value at the wellhead plus 8 cents per 1,000 cubic feet of natural gas extracted. Wellheads producing less than 60,000 cubic feet of gas per day would be exempt. Currently there is no severance tax imposed on natural gas severed within Pennsylvania.

The distribution of revenues is as follows:

- General Fund: 80%

- Local share: 12%
- Environmental Stewardship Fund: 4%
- Conservation District Fund for distribution to county conservation districts pursuant to guidelines established by the State Conservation Commission: 2%
- Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund: 0.5%
- Pennsylvania Game Commission: 0.5%
- Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission: 0.5%
- Department of Public Welfare to provide cash crisis grants to low-income households under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): 0.5%

Cigarette Tax: This bill would increase the cigarette tax by 10 cents per pack, which would increase the tax from the current \$1.60 per pack to \$1.70 per pack (of 20 cigarettes).

Revenue Estimate: Compared to current law, the revenues raised by this bill total \$320 million of which \$284.5 million is for the General Fund. New revenues are detailed below:

(\$ in millions)	Revenue FY 2010-11
Sales Tax Vendor Discount	\$ 48.7
Other Tobacco Products	\$ 36.3
Severance Tax	\$ 141.9
Cigarette Tax	\$ 57.6
Total General Fund	\$ 284.5
Severance Tax Distributions	
12% Local Share	\$ 21.3
4% Environmental Stewardship Fund	\$ 7.1
2% County Conservation Fund	\$ 3.5
0.5% Hazardous sites Cleanup Fund	\$ 0.9
0.5% Game Commission	\$ 0.9
0.5% Fish and Boat Commission	\$ 0.9
0.5% LIHEAP	\$ 0.9
Total	\$ 319.85

Taking into consideration the revenue loss of \$2.72 million associated with the sales and use tax exemption certificates, the net revenue effect on the General Fund is \$281.78 million in FY 2010-11.

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General Note and Disclaimer: *This Fiscal Note was prepared pursuant to House Rule 19(a), and the elements considered and reported above are required by Section 5 of the rule. Estimates are calculated using the best information available. Actual costs and revenue impact incurred may vary from estimates.*