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## **Carlson works against own district's wishes**

By: Elizabeth Summers, Grand Forks

GRAND FORKS — As a Grand Forks resident, I am not directly represented by Rep. Al Carlson, R-Fargo, and so I wondered how it is that this one legislator from Fargo can undo my vote for Measure 3 and thwart the will of the majority of North Dakota voters.

What kind of person does that? Who is this Al Carlson who arrogantly ignores 165,000 voters?

Well, I did a little checking and found out that in 2006, when Carlson was re-elected to the North Dakota Legislature, he got only 2,903 votes or 52 percent of the votes cast. By contrast, some 3,998 voters in Carlson's district voted to support Measure 3 in November.

That's right: In his own district, 1,000 more voters supported Measure 3 than supported Carlson's re-election bid.

I then wondered, where does this guy stand on other tobacco-control issues? In June, 61 percent of the voters of Fargo voted for smoke-free workplaces. Yet, Carlson goes to the Legislature and votes against a statewide smoke-free law.

Without boring Herald readers with the details, let me just say that on pretty much all tobacco-control issues, Carlson takes the side of the tobacco industry over the constituents in his district, Fargo and the public health community. Shame on him.

Now, the only mystery left for me to resolve is: Why do Republican house members (with the notable exceptions of Bismarck Reps. Bob Martinson and George Keiser) support Carlson's pro-tobacco industry policies over the public-health interests of the people?

I don't know. That is something voters should ask their legislators directly. I intend to ask mine.

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### **Voters were clear about Measure 3**

For the past decade or more, the North Dakota Legislature has shown little regard for public health in the area of tobacco control and prevention by allocating tobacco settlement funds in such a way that it prevents tobacco settlement dollars from being allocated to critical prevention and cessation services.

By: Melany Jenkins, Fargo

For the past decade or more, the North Dakota Legislature has shown little regard for public health in the area of tobacco control and prevention by allocating tobacco settlement funds in such a way that it prevents tobacco settlement dollars from being allocated to critical prevention and cessation services.

As a consequence, using our beautiful system of democracy, North Dakota residents got together, not just one but a majority, and with their votes made it clear to their state legislators that public health was important and that tobacco control and prevention was vital.

These services are needed in the state to reduce the exposure of tobacco smoke to kids, to women of child-bearing age, especially those who are pregnant, infants as well as children and to increase the availability and access to effective smoking prevention and cessation services.

I find it mind-boggling and amazing that in a country built on the theory of a government by the people, with the intent to empower the majority, that we still have an argument as to how, when and by whom the funds in Senate Bill 2063 (Measure 3) should be directed.

The public health needs of tobacco control and prevention can no longer be ignored and pushed aside. Addressing it with a separate commission, as set up by Measure 3, not by the health department, will facilitate a stronger tobacco control program in our state.

As a North Dakota resident, voter and maternal child health advocate, I am hopeful that legislators have gotten the message, have heard their constituents (the voters) and will behave consequently by keeping Measure 3 intact.