Robbing Smokers to Pay Lawyers
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Abstract:
The bill, passed by the committee on April Fools' Day, provides that if you receive a dollar from a tobacco company as the result of a lawsuit, the payment will be matched by four dollars from a fund supported by a $1.10-a-pack increase in the federal tax on cigarettes. (There is a cap on lawsuit payouts, limiting the companies' direct liability to $1.3 billion a year and the tax-financed litigation subsidy to $5.2 billion annually.) What this means is that suits against the tobacco companies will really be only 20% against Big Tobacco and 80% against the governmental and public health agencies that will divvy up the revenue from the tax increase.