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### Cancer Charities Hope to Beat Tobacco Lobbying Money With Social Media

March 11, 2012, 9:45 am

By *Cody Switzer*

In the battle over a proposed California tax on cigarettes, Livestrong and other cancer charities are trying to prove that social networks can be as potent an advocacy tool as money.

The proposed tax would add a \$1 levy to each pack of cigarettes sold in the state, said Doug Ulman, chief executive of Livestrong, in a session at the South by Southwest Interactive conference, in Austin. The tax would pay for cancer research, services, and anti-smoking programs.

Livestrong has already spent \$1.5-million, as much as it can under federal tax law, to promote the tax as part of a coalition of charities that plans to invest a combined \$10-million in the campaign. Tobacco companies are expected to spend about \$100-million to oppose the measure, Mr. Ulman said.

Because a similar ballot measure failed in 2006, Mr. Ulman said he believes this campaign can offer a test about whether adding social-media advocacy to the mix makes a difference.

The charity has contacted Facebook and Twitter to see whether they would monitor the campaign as a potential case study, Mr. Ulman said.

Californians vote on the measure in June.

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