

Tax anything that tans

By **Boston Herald editorial staff** | Wednesday, December 23, 2009 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | **Editorials**

Forget the public option, the abortion funding dilemma or Senate majority leader Harry Reid's astonishing pay-to-play approach to securing votes. At some point during the high-stakes negotiations over health care reform the conversation at the Capitol boiled down to this:

"So guys, do we stick with the 'Botax' ? Or should we save the plastic surgeons and squeeze the tanning salon industry instead?"

Oh, the framers would be so very proud.

Yes, there were some very clear winners in the product that emerged this week from the Senate sausage factory and they include the cosmetic surgery lobby, which managed to excise from the bill a planned tax on facelifts and tummy tucks.

That tax was estimated to raise an estimated \$5.8 billion. Instead, the Senate bill calls for a 10 percent tax on "tanning services," which senators estimate will raise \$2.7 billion.

And, of course, it will have the added advantage of providing a disincentive to climbing into a tanning bed and risking skin cancer. That's a helpful bit of spin.

It all came as quite a shock to the Indoor Tanning Association. Yes, such an entity does in fact exist, even if its president acknowledges it can't possibly match the lobbying might of the American Medical Association and other groups that fought the Botax. (The Real Housewives of Orange County, perhaps?)

Vexed tanning salon owners say they're already suffering because of the economy and they have no idea where the estimate of projected revenues came from. But since when does Congress let real numbers get in the way of its political agenda?

Yep, they're new to this lobbying thing all right . . .

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Yes, tax that tan

Monday, December 28, 2009 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | **Letters to the Editor**

The Herald criticized the proposed tax on indoor tanning in the Senate bill ("Tax anything that tans," Dec. 23). Yet last summer the Herald reported that "international cancer experts have moved tanning beds and other sources of ultraviolet radiation into the top cancer risk category" ("Tanning beds as dangerous as mustard gas and arsenic," July 29).

Indoor tanning before age 30 has been linked with a 75 percent increase in the risk of melanoma, the deadliest skin cancer. This tax, like taxes on tobacco and alcohol, will hopefully decrease usage of indoor tanning beds and thus reduce skin cancer. And what is a 10 percent tax? If a tanning session costs \$10, that means \$1.

- Martin Cohn, Associate Director, Mass. Academy of Dermatology, Norwell

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