

Coalition pushes \$940M in taxes to plug budget gap

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BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A coalition of nonprofit organizations, unions and advocacy groups is pushing lawmakers to pass \$940 million in tax hikes to help close next year's budget gap, an agenda that faces strong opposition from the governor and Republicans.

The group, calling itself Better Choices for A Better Louisiana, wants lawmakers to increase so-called "sin taxes" on cigarettes, gambling and alcohol, while also reversing income tax cuts passed in 2007 and 2008. Most of the proposals would require a two-thirds vote in the legislative session that begins next week.

Gov. Bobby Jindal, House leaders and Republican leaders oppose any attempts to raise taxes.

Eddie Ashworth, with the Better Choices organization, says officials must consider boosting state revenue rather than a third year of deep budget cuts.

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