

STATE AND NATIONAL

Alcohol license-fee hike, cigarette tax to be passed on to local customers

By Sabrina Smith
Staff Writer

Bar-hopping in Chapel Hill will be a more expensive exercise this year due to increased state fees for alcohol retail-

ers who say they will be forced to pass the cost burdens on to drinking patrons. The N.C. state legislature increased the beer and wine retail license fee by \$80 this summer and raised the surcharge on mixed drinks by \$5, said

Warren Plonk, budget analyst for the House and Senate Finance committees. The additional \$5 will go to the state's General Fund, Plonk said.

C.J. Stott, manager of Spring Garden Bar & Grill in Carrboro, said his customers would see prices increase at the Garden.

"Prices definitely have gone up. I've noticed it when I buy liquor for the restaurant, and that, of course, will force

me to charge more," Stott said.

Ham's Restaurant customers will also feel the effects of the surcharge increase, said Ham's manager Ted Harmon.

"We've had to make some small price increases, based on how much more each shot will cost us. This is something everyone should have to do," Harmon said.

Additionally, the price on cigarettes

rose \$.03 this year, but many student smokers say the additional cost won't deter them from lighting up.

The N.C. General Assembly raised the tax on cigarettes from \$.02 to \$.05 on the pack on Aug. 1 in an effort to speed budget-balancing efforts.

Jack Malone, a freshman biology major from Knoxville, is a smoker who was unfamiliar with the tax but said he supported it.

"Smoking is hardly a necessity. It's better that they tax cigarettes than raise other taxes," Malone said.

Non-smoker Stephen Schneider, a sophomore chemistry major from Charlotte, agrees that North Carolina's low cigarette tax is a good target to help balance the budget.

"We definitely have budget prob-

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