Ten Years After Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, Much Work to be Done to Combat Tobacco Use

Statement of John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., chief executive officer, American Cancer Society and American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Atlanta 2008/11/17 -“November 23, 2008 will mark the 10th anniversary of the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) between the tobacco industry and 46 states. Despite a commitment by the states to use proceeds from the settlement to combat tobacco use, states have unfortunately devoted the funds to other priorities at the same time the tobacco industry has increased spending on marketing and promotions. The tragic result is that after five years of decline, youth smoking rates have stalled since 2003.

“The 10th anniversary of the MSA serves as an opportunity for states to renew their commitment to funding tobacco prevention programs as well as take proactive steps to pass smoke-free laws, increase excise taxes and increase access to cessation services for all. Investing in these collective efforts is smart and fiscally responsible as it provides the opportunity to reduce tobacco-related health care costs and ultimately to save lives by preventing disease and premature death.

“We shouldn’t overlook the progress that has stemmed from an agreement to hold Big Tobacco accountable for decades of egregious marketing tactics and misleading claims about the danger of its products. The MSA spurred the creation of the American Legacy Foundation, which runs the highly successful nationwide **truth**® anti-smoking campaign, and provided funding for state youth anti-tobacco initiatives. The **truth**® campaign can be credited with approximately 22 percent of the decline in youth smoking prevalence between 1999-2002.

“The American Cancer Society and its advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), have made it a national priority to reduce the proportion of high school students under 18 who smoke. Studies have shown that comprehensive tobacco control programs that include increases in excise taxes, effective anti-tobacco media campaigns, and restrictions on smoking in public places reduce cigarette smoking and particularly promote rapid declines in youth smoking prevalence.

“Smoking-related diseases remain the leading cause of preventable death, claiming the lives of 438,000 Americans annually. Smoking accounts for at least 30 percent of all cancer deaths, 87 percent of lung cancer deaths, and is associated with increased risk of at least 15 types of cancer. We have an opportunity to make a significant difference in these numbers for future generations, but to do so, our country must do a better job of protecting the health of our youth.”

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States. For more information, visit www.cancer.org

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit

www.acscan.org

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