U.S. Senate Passes Historic Legislation to End Big Tobacco's Unfettered Access to America's Youth

Statement of John R. Seffrin, PhD, CEO, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Washington 2009/06/11 -"Today is an historic day for public health, as the U.S. Senate passed legislation by a bipartisan 79-17 vote that will finally put an end to Big Tobacco's despicable marketing practices that are designed to addict children to its deadly products. Senate passage of the 'Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act' (S. 982) has the potential to reduce the scourge of tobacco products, which kill more than 400,000 Americans every year.

"This critical bill, which has been in the works for more than a decade, would finally grant the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority to regulate the manufacturing, marketing, and sale of tobacco products.

"Tobacco is virtually the only consumable product not regulated in the U.S. and the tobacco industry exploits this undeserved free pass by spending nearly $40 million every day aggressively marketing its products, especially to children, with enticing candy- and fruit-flavored cigarettes. The legislation would stop the marketing of tobacco products to children, require tobacco companies to list the poisons in their products and mandate larger and more effective warning labels on tobacco product packaging.

"The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), the advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, together with more than 1,000 public health, medical, children's, and faith-based organizations, supports this long overdue legislation and applauds its passage. ACS CAN commends Senators Harry Reid (D-NV), Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Richard Durbin (D-IL) for their determination to get this legislation to the President to be signed into law this year, and Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) for his leadership on this legislation and his long-time record of championing public health issues.

"Every day, 3,500 children pick up their first cigarette and 1,000 become addicted smokers. Regulating the tobacco industry could help break the cycle of addiction to tobacco in our country."

ACS CAN is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate organization of the American Cancer Society, dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage lawmakers, candidates and government officials to support laws and policies that will make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer. For more information, visit

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