

Surgeon General's Report Confirms Steps Necessary to Break the Chain of Youth Tobacco Addiction

WASHINGTON, DC – March 8, 2012 – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Office of the Surgeon General this morning released their 31st tobacco use report, titled *Preventing Tobacco use Among Youth and Young Adults*. The report includes updated information about the patterns and trends of youth tobacco use, its health effects, the influence marketing by the tobacco industry has on youth initiation and prevalence, and efforts that must be implemented in order to curb these trends.

“This report highlights the urgent need to employ proven methods nationwide that prevent young people from smoking and encourage all smokers to quit, including passage of smoke-free laws, increases in tobacco excise taxes and fully funded tobacco prevention programs,” said John R. Seffrin, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society and the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). “The report is evidence that strong implementation of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which grants the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the authority to regulate the manufacture, sale and marketing of tobacco products, is vital to stopping the influential marketing messages being delivered to teens on a daily basis by Big Tobacco.”

An estimated 3,800 kids pick up their first cigarette every day and 9 in 10 current smokers started before the age of 18. Nearly one in four high school seniors smoke and two new smokers under age 25 replace every person who dies from tobacco use. After years of progress, declines in the use of tobacco by youth and young adults have slowed for cigarette smoking and stalled for smokeless tobacco use. Ninety-nine percent of all first-time tobacco use occurs by age 26 and many of the long-term diseases associated with smoking, such as lung cancer, are more likely among those who begin to smoke earlier in life.

“Combating tobacco use requires a multi-pronged approach that includes strong federal regulation, higher tobacco excise taxes, comprehensive smoke-free laws, sustained public education campaigns, school-based policies and programs, and strong tobacco prevention and cessation programs,” said Christopher W. Hansen, president of ACS CAN. “Today’s report shows that despite tough budget times, it is critical that states fund evidence-based tobacco control programs, based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Best Practice recommendations.”

Evidence shows that advertising by Big Tobacco not only encourages youth to start using tobacco, but also encourages them to keep using these deadly and addictive products. Strong implementation of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act will rein in Big Tobacco’s ability to market directly to our nation’s youth. Tobacco has historically been among the least regulated products sold in America - exempt from basic consumer protections such as ingredient disclosure, product testing, and restrictions on marketing to children. Major provisions of the law that are already in place include:

- A ban on candy- and fruit-flavored cigarettes, which for decades were primarily marketed to attract and addict youth smokers
- A first-ever federal prohibition on cigarette and smokeless tobacco sales to minors
- A ban on all tobacco-brand sponsorships of sports and cultural events
- A ban on virtually all free tobacco samples and giveaways of non-tobacco items, such as hats and T-shirts, with the purchase of tobacco

Increasing the price of tobacco products has proven successful in encouraging smokers to quit and discouraging youth from taking up the habit in the first place. ACS CAN has led the way in working with state legislatures to pass more than 100 cigarette tax increases in 47 states, the District of Columbia and several US territories since the beginning of 2002. The national cigarette tax average is \$1.46 per pack, up from \$1.34 at the end of 2009 and 61 cents at the end of 2002.

Since 2002, the Society and ACS CAN have helped 35 states, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia enact laws requiring that 100 percent of workplaces and/or restaurants and/or bars be smoke-free, protecting nearly 80 percent of the US population from secondhand smoke. Currently, 23 of these states, the District of Columbia, the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico have a statewide smoke-free law covering all three categories.

Tobacco kills more than 443,000 Americans each year, causes nearly 90 percent of lung cancer deaths, and is responsible for nearly one-third of all cancers. Tobacco-related illnesses are expensive and impact is not isolated to smokers alone. In the United States each year, tobacco use costs an estimated \$193 billion in direct and indirect healthcare costs. Meanwhile, the tobacco industry spends more than \$10 billion a year - \$29 million each day – to addict new, young smokers and keep current smokers hooked. ACS CAN is a leader in the fight to reduce suffering from tobacco-related illnesses with a nationwide strategy to pass laws proven to help smokers quit and prevent nonsmokers from ever starting.

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer. As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping people stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight. As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing more than \$3.5 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, about 11 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us any time, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit 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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