

March 17, 2005

The Honorable
Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Member of Congress:

We are writing to you as national leaders of America's faith communities to strongly urge you to support legislation requiring effective regulation of tobacco products by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that Senators Mike DeWine (R-OH) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Representatives Thomas Davis (R-VA) and Henry Waxman (D-CA) intend to reintroduce in the 109th Congress.

We believe that the most important thing you can do to reduce tobacco addiction would be to work for the enactment of strong legislation supported by the public health community to give the FDA the authority to regulate tobacco products. We find it incredible that the FDA can ensure the safety of everyday items like macaroni and cheese, but has no authority over tobacco, a product that kills over 400,000 Americans every year.

FDA oversight is especially needed to crack down on illegal sales of tobacco products to children and to restrict advertising and marketing that appeal to children. The tobacco industry is aggressively marketing a new generation of products with unproven claims that they are less harmful. This continued deception of consumers makes ever more urgent the need for FDA restrictions on advertising and marketing to children, such as the manufacture and sale of candy-flavored cigarettes, such as *Twista Lime*, *Strawberry Liquid Zoo* and *Caribbean Chill*.

The faith community spends too much time burying mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers who die because they became addicted to tobacco products when they were young. We know all too well that the tobacco companies continue to spend billions of dollars to addict people to this deadly product. We also know that the federal government can reduce the staggering addiction rate, particularly among vulnerable children, by fully regulating tobacco products. For our children's sake, we urge you to do so.

We would be grateful to know your position on this issue. We would also very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss how we can work together to protect our children from the horrors of tobacco addiction.

Respectfully,

James Winkler, General Secretary
General Board of Church and Society United Methodist Church

Sarah Ward, President
Woman's Christian Temperance Union
Dr. DeWitt Williams, Director

Health Ministries, North American Division
Seventh Day Adventists

Karen Vagley, Director
Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Julie Taylor, Executive Secretary for Children, Youth and Family Advocacy
Women's Division, GBGM
United Methodist Church

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, Secretary General
Islamic Society of North America

Curtis Ramsey-Lucas, National Coordinator, Public and Social Advocacy
American Baptist Churches USA

Reverend Deborah L. Patterson, Executive Director
International Parish Nurse Resource Center

Dr. Richard D. Land, President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
Southern Baptist Convention

Phillip Jones, Director, Brethren Witness/Washington Office
Church of the Brethren

Reverend Elenora Giddings Ivory, Director
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office

Noemi M. Fuentes, Program Associate, Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence
(SPSARV)
GBGM, United Methodist Church

Reverend Bob Edgar, General Secretary
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

Reverend Kaye Edwards, Director of Family and Children's Ministries Disciples Home Missions
(DHM) "Equipping Disciples for Christ" Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Reverend Michael H. Crosby, OFMCap., Coordinator Tobacco Program

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility

Patricia G. Burkhardt, Legislative Officer
Church Women United

Roy Branson, Co-Chair
Inter-Religious Coalition on Smoking or Health

Barbara Baylor, M.P.H.
Minister for Health and Wellness
United Church of Christ

Sharon Adkins, President
Health Ministries Association