



AMERICAN  LUNG ASSOCIATION*
THE CHRISTMAS SEAL PEOPLE®



Coalition on Smoking OR Health

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TOBACCO EXCISE TAX INCREASE AMONG HEALTH GROUPS' RECOMMENDATIONS TO CLINTON/CONGRESS

Washington, Jan. 6 -- The American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association and the American Lung Association, united as the Coalition on Smoking OR Health, today recommended three action steps that Congress and President-elect Clinton should take immediately to reduce death and disease and mounting health care costs caused by tobacco use in America.

The three recommendations are:

- * legislation to increase the tobacco excise tax;
- * legislation that would require tobacco products to be fully regulated by the federal Food and Drug Administration, and
- * comprehensive clean indoor air legislation, including a ban on smoking in the workplace.

"Tobacco use causes more than 434,000 deaths each year in the United States and burdens the national health care system at an estimated cost of \$65 billion annually," says Alan Davis, chairman of the Coalition and vice president for public issues for the American Cancer Society.

Davis adds, "What level of moral outrage must be reached before the federal government stops backing down to the tobacco industry and fully commits its resources to fighting tobacco use?"

Regarding tobacco excise taxes, Blake Cady, M.D., chief of surgical oncology at New England Deaconess Hospital, Boston and a volunteer with the American Cancer Society says, "Health experts agree that major increases in cigarette taxes will dramatically reduce smoking in the United States. It is estimated that a \$2 per pack increase could save 2 million or more premature deaths by discouraging young people from beginning to smoke and by encouraging some current smokers to quit. This level of tobacco tax increase has the potential for saving more lives than were lost in all American wars combined."

Adds Cady, "Congress and President-elect Clinton should stand behind an increase in the tobacco excise tax, as revenues can be used for tobacco use prevention programs, health promotion, education and research and health care reform financing."

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Regarding tobacco regulation, Raymond L. Woosley, M.D., Ph.D., chairman of the department of pharmacology at Georgetown University, and a volunteer with the American Heart Association says, "The lack of federal control over tobacco products has serious consequences for millions of smokers who are trying to quit their addiction. Unlike other legal products, tobacco is not regulated by any federal agency for its manufacture, sale, distribution, advertising, labeling and promotion. For example, no government agency has the full authority to determine the level of risk for many chemical additives and potentially deadly constituents that end up in tobacco products or are emitted through environmental tobacco smoke. We recommend that legislation be enacted that would give the FDA the authority to regulate tobacco products as it does foods, cosmetics and legal drugs."

Adds Woosley, "The FDA and the Federal Trade Commission should act immediately to regulate certain cigarettes as 'drugs,' such as low-tar, low-nicotine products, which imply through advertising that they are safer and less addictive. There are currently no requirements for tobacco companies to prove those claims. The FDA and FTC should also crack down on other misleading advertising campaigns, such as R.J. Reynolds' Joe Camel and Philip Morris' recent Marlboro Adventure Team."

On clean indoor air, Alfred Munzer, M.D., director of critical care medicine at Washington Adventist Hospital, Takoma Park, Maryland, and president-elect of the American Lung Association says, "The scientific evidence clearly supports the need for tighter restrictions on smoking in public places. We recommend more aggressive legislative efforts at the state and local levels to strengthen existing clean indoor air laws."

Adds Munzer, "A smoke-free work environment would save lives and significantly reduce health care costs. Preventing disease is much less emotionally, physically and financially devastating than treating it."

Says Munzer, "The final EPA report on the 'Respiratory Health Effects of Passive Smoking,' expected to be released tomorrow (Jan. 7) will be a powerful persuader for strong federal, state and local public policy action for cleaner, healthier, smoke-free air."

The recommendations outlined today are included in the document, "Framework for Public Policy Activities of the Coalition on Smoking OR Health," which has been sent to President-elect Clinton and members of Congress.

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The Coalition on Smoking OR Health was formed in 1982 by the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association and the American Lung Association to more effectively inform federal legislators and other public officials about the health consequences of tobacco use. The three health organizations represent more than six million volunteers throughout the United States.