

Tobacco Issues in the 101st Congress

2048215003

January 1989

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A number of issues affecting the tobacco industry will receive consideration during the 101st Congress. Most of them are carried over from the 100th Congress, when tobacco issues were debated almost until the hour of sine die adjournment. The issues are:

Excise taxes. Despite the demonstrated regressivity and discriminatory nature of excise taxes, proposals to increase the cigarette excise tax will be a topic in every forum where the budget deficit is discussed. In addition, rifle shot attempts to use the tax to pay for pet projects ranging from aspects of health care to low-cost housing, have become commonplace.

Advertising. Hearings on serious proposals to prohibit the advertising and promotion of tobacco products can be expected in one or more Energy and Commerce Committee subcommittees on the House side. Parallel efforts to remove the business tax deduction for advertising and promotion costs will be before the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees.

Labeling. The 1988 Surgeon General's Report focused on the subject of addiction, and legislation to turn the report's conclusions into a new cigarette warning label is certain to be introduced. Ironically, such legislation requiring a new federal label is also likely to raise the question of repealing the federal preemption of cigarette warnings.

Airline Smoking. The sponsor of the smoking ban on two-hour domestic flights already has announced his intention to use the appropriations process to extend this ban to all domestic flights in 1989, ignoring the fact that the two-year trial period on the two-hour ban will not be over until 1990.

Military. Measures to raise cigarette prices in military sales facilities, or to remove them from commissaries altogether, will be offered, particularly in the Senate, whenever there is an opportunity. These efforts ignore the fact that lower prices for all products in exchanges and commissaries are considered part of the military benefits package.

Fire-Safe Cigarettes. An inter-agency committee, created by Congress, has concluded that it may be possible to manufacture cigarettes which are less likely to set fires, and has recommended additional study to establish, for example, a "validated test method". The tobacco industry supports legislation introduced last year by Congressmen Boucher and Bliley and Senators Gore and Breaux to implement these recommendations. Other legislation may be introduced that will ignore the committee's recommendations and proceed directly to implementation of a standard.

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Increasing excise taxes on tobacco products

Excise taxes imposed on tobacco products produce \$9.2 billion annually at various levels of governments. The federal tax is 16¢ per pack of cigarettes. This generates approximately \$4.5 billion annually for the General Revenue Fund. In addition, each state and 396 cities and municipalities impose some form of excise tax on tobacco products. This generates approximately \$4.7 billion annually for these governments. Consequently, the average tax on each pack of cigarettes sold is 38¢, approximately 36% of the total price.

Increasing the tobacco tax is perceived to be politically painless. However, the impact of an increase on middle and low income Americans is anything but painless. Utilization of this excise tax to reduce the deficit or finance government programs places a heavier tax burden on those least capable of paying additional taxes. The excise tax is the same for an individual who makes \$10,000 as for the individual who makes \$100,000. Increasing the excise tax would substantially reduce benefits provided by the Tax Reform Act of 1985 and ignores the more than equitable tax revenue currently paid by users of these products.

In addition to his no-tax pledge, President-elect Bush has voiced his opposition specifically to increasing cigarette excise taxes. (See attached letter from Bush to North Carolina Governor Jim Martin. Also note the two fact sheets and recent newspaper op-ed, attached.)



GEORGE BUSH

September 10, 1988

The Honorable James G. Martin
Governor
Post Office Box 12377
Raleigh, North Carolina 27605

Dear Jim: :

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to restate my stand against tax increases.

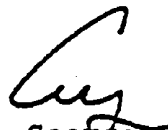
As you know, I have long believed that tax increases would damage our economic recovery. Throughout this campaign, I have been consistent. I will not raise taxes, period. There have been over 17 million new jobs in America since 1982, but tax increases would put those jobs at risk.

Therefore, I am strongly opposed to any increase in excise taxes, including those on tobacco or cigarettes. This would harm North Carolina and be inflationary for the nation's economy as a whole.

As you know, this issue is one of many on which I stand in sharp contrast to my opponent, who raised taxes, including cigarette taxes, by over \$100 million this year alone. Let me say it again, Jim: I will not raise taxes, period.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,



George Bush

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Mark Shields

Cotton Mather Democrats

The American Puritan has been described as an unhappy soul who lives in mortal dread that somebody, somewhere—right now—might be enjoying himself. One secret to the survival of the Democratic Party is that the Democrats shrewdly did not compete with their political adversaries—the Federalists, the Whigs, the Republicans—for the voting allegiance of the American Puritans. More reliably numerous and better company than those New England moralists, concluded the Democrats, were citizens whose families hadn't come over on the Mayflower and who enjoyed a cold beer, a warm laugh and, perhaps, a game of chance and even a friendly dance.

But now, in their calls for increased federal taxes on beer, tobacco and gasoline to reduce the budget deficit, some elected Democrats choose to forget their party's proud tradition and to forsake their party's working-class members.

There remains one consolation for Democrats advocating hikes in the "sin taxes" on smoking, drinking and driving: their conversion to virtue is applauded by contemporary American Puritans.

What has happened to the Democrats? Have they forgotten how their founders opposed Alexander Hamilton's heavy excise tax on whiskey, which was then almost exclusively consumed by the Irish and Scottish? Hamilton had the strong support of New England Puritans, who were delighted to discourage liquor consumption by the lower classes while painlessly providing for the public treasury.

The sin tax on whiskey may have made the Puritans happy, but it helped make the Scotch-Irish into Democrats. Later waves of immigrants—Germans, Irish-Catholics, Poles, Russians—found the Democratic Party more hospitable to their festivals and fun than they did the party of the joyless.

The Puritan impulse is reflected in the case for increasing taxes on cigarettes and beer. Indifferent to the contradiction in their argument, sin-tax supporters insist that higher taxes on smoking and drinking will mean a) more taxes collected and b) less smoking and drinking (since both will cost the consumer more), which means a healthier and more virtuous America.

Disregarded by such advocates is the revered Democratic tradition of basing taxes on progressivity, on one's ability to pay. Sin taxes on tobacco, gasoline and beer ignore that principle. For example, American families earning between \$10,000 and \$30,000 a year spend as a percentage of their income more than twice as much on gasoline as do those earning over \$50,000. Somebody who has to drive 50 miles each way between home and work is probably not doing leveraged buyouts. Long daily commutes

by passenger car are more often a factor of economic imperative than aesthetics.

Cigarette smoking is increasingly, almost exclusively, a practice of working-class and blue-collar Americans of modest income who never went to college. Granted, these folks do not have a battery of Washington lawyer-lobbyists on retainer, but is that any reason to raise their taxes?

Americans earning \$20,000 or less a year spend, as a percentage of their income, more than three times as much on beer as do Americans earning \$75,000 a year. While there is no empirical data available, it's still a good bet that the higher-income group smartly spends at least 10 times as much on bottled water imported from France. Yet no Democrat is urging a dollar-a-six-pack levy on Perrier.

To urge more and bigger taxes on smokes and suds smacks of a desire to save people from themselves—in spite of

themselves. That's exactly what the resident party of American Puritans strove to do for every group of immigrants from the Old World by banning Sunday picnics and dancing and by closing down the neighborhood taverns. It cannot be reassuring for Democrats to look in the mirror and see Cotton Mather glowering back at them.

When did the Democrats plunge into the fatal error that somehow it is acceptable to be rich, virtuous to be poor, and that the only sin is to be a member of the middle class? Such folly has left the stench of snobbishness at too many Democratic gatherings where the working American is seen as neither the legendary Joe Hill nor the admirable Norma Rae but instead as the bigoted Archie Bunker.

It's time Democrats remember who they are, where they come from, and that taxes ought to be based on the ability to pay.

STATE CIGARETTE EXCISE TAX RATES

(cents per 20-pack)

North Carolina	2	Nevada	20
Virginia	2.5	Colorado	20
Kentucky	3	Illinois	20
South Carolina	7	Arkansas	21
Wyoming	8	New York	21
Georgia	12	Oklahoma	23
Maryland	13	Utah	23
Missouri	13	South Dakota	23
Tennessee	13	Florida	24
Delaware	14	Kansas	24
New Mexico	15	Michigan	25
Arizona	15	Texas	26
Indiana	15.5	Massachusetts	26
Alaska	16	Connecticut	26
Louisiana	16	New Jersey	27
Montana	16	Nebraska	27
Alabama	16.5	North Dakota	27
New Hampshire	17	Oregon	27
Vermont	17	Rhode Island	27
Dist. of Columbia	17	Maine	28
West Virginia	17	Wisconsin	30
Ohio	18	Hawaii	30
Idaho	18	Washington	31
Mississippi	18	Iowa	34
Pennsylvania	18	California	35
		Minnesota	38

TEN REASONS NOT TO INCREASE THE CIGARETTE EXCISE TAX

1. Currently, the federal government, 50 state and 396 local governments impose a tax on cigarettes. The average total tax per pack is 38 cents (16 cents - federal; 22 cents - state and local).
2. Governments collect more tax revenue from individuals who purchase cigarettes than any other commodity except gasoline (\$9.61 BILLION collected annually - \$4.75 billion for federal and \$4.86 billion for state and local).
3. "An increase in the excise tax on tobacco would be the most regressive of all tax increases considered." As a percent of income, the tobacco excise tax is 15 times higher for low-income (under \$5,000) families than for high-income (over \$50,000) families.

Congressional Budget Office
Staff Working Paper
January 1987

4. "The biggest threat to tax reform is that Congress may attempt to meet its 1988 budget targets through stiff increases in federal excise taxes."

CITIZENS FOR TAX JUSTICE
"Meeting the Revenue Targets in the
1988 Budget: Will Tax Reform be
Extended or Undermined?," May 1987

5. "The cigarette excise tax does not have a consumer base broad enough to materially reduce the deficit."

General Accounting Office
Staff Study
August 1986

6. "An excise tax increase would raise the taxes of low-income taxpayers disproportionately and would substantially more than offset the income tax reduction these taxpayers received from the Tax Reform Act of 1986."

"An Analysis of the Regressivity of
Excise Taxes." Policy Economics Group,
Peat Marwick Main & Company, submitted to
CART, May 1987

7. "For all poor families, even a modest increase in excise taxes will take more than all of the tax relief afforded them in the 1986 tax bill. These increases will cost the poor five times as much -- nearly \$2 billion -- as they would receive in income tax cuts from the Tax Reform Act of 1986. This will considerably magnify the incidence, prevalence and the enormity of poverty in the United States."

Rep. Mervyn M. Dymally, Chairman,
Congressional Black Caucus

8. Doubling the tax will cause a loss of 28,500 American jobs in the core tobacco industry. In 1982 when Congress increased the tax from 8 cents to 16 cents per pack, 14,600 American job opportunities in the tobacco industry were lost.
9. "Higher excise taxes have an adverse trickle-down effect on the farmers whose commodities, such as tobacco, grains, and wine grapes, go into tobacco and alcohol products."

American Farm Bureau Federation

10. Doubling the federal excise tax will cause economic harm to the American tobacco farmer, their families and communities. A 16-cent increase would result in an approximate decrease of \$110 million in sales of leaf tobacco (37.5 million pounds).

ORGANIZATIONS OPPOSED TO INCREASED EXCISE TAXES

American Agriculture Movement

American Farm Bureau Federation

Coalition Against Regressive Taxation (CART)

National Association of Manufacturers

Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Inc.

Chamber of Commerce of the U.S.A.

Citizens for Tax Justice

Coalition on Human Needs

CO\$T (Citizens Opposed to Secret Taxation)Coalition

Council of State Governments

National Conference of State Legislatures

AFL-CIO

Labor Council for Latin American Advancement

National Black Caucus of State Legislators

The National Conference of Black Mayors

The League of United Latin American Citizens

Cuban American National Council, Inc.

Mexican-American Political Association

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Advertising Ban Legislation

In the 100th Congress, Representatives Synar and Whittaker introduced almost identical bills to ban all advertising and promotion of tobacco products; similar legislation can be expected in the new Congress.

An advertising ban is an unwarranted call for government censorship that should be rejected. The proposed ban has provoked an extraordinary First Amendment outcry across the political spectrum. The opponents of such an advertising ban range from the American Civil Liberties Union to the U.S. Department of Justice, which rarely agree on First Amendment issues.

In February 1988, the American Bar Association rejected a proposal that it endorse the proposed ban. It did so, according to ABA President Eugene Thomas, "because we believe in the free-speech principle."

Critics of the proposed advertising ban include the most eminent constitutional scholars in the country -- Professor Philip B. Kurland of the University of Chicago Law School, Professor Charles Alan Wright of the University of Texas Law School, Professor William Van Alstyne of Duke University Law School, Professor Burt Newborne of New York University Law School, and Professor Alan Dershowitz of Harvard Law School. All believe the ban would violate basic First Amendment values.

The proposed advertising ban is objectionable because it is an effort by government to manipulate behavior by restricting speech. Representatives Synar and Whittaker propose to accomplish their goals not by providing consumers with more information concerning smoking and health but by denying them competitive messages concerning individual cigarette brands. Such censorship strikes at the heart of the First Amendment.

The proponents of a tobacco product advertising ban may believe that consumer behavior can be easily manipulated by limiting commercial speech but the evidence simply does not support such a premise. Advertising bans and restrictions abroad have not affected total consumption of tobacco products. Indeed, the incidence of smoking among youth is actually higher in those countries that have banned or restricted cigarette advertising than in many that have not. As Michael Pertschuk, former chairman of the FTC and long an advocate of severe restrictions on cigarettes has acknowledged, "No one really pretends that advertising is a major determinant of smoking in this country or any other." The American Council of Science and Health similarly has recognized that an advertising ban would "probably not" decrease cigarette consumption.

For the same reasons collateral efforts to repeal the income tax deduction for tobacco advertising and promotion costs should be defeated.

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Adding a Nicotine "Addiction" Label

Efforts were made late in the last Congress to add a separate nicotine addiction warning statement to the four which already are included in cigarette packaging and advertising.

This legislation was prompted by a Office of Smoking and Health report published last year which equated nicotine to heroin, cocaine and other illegal addictive substances. Widely promoted by the Surgeon General as part of his systematic strategy to stamp out tobacco use in the United States by the turn of the next century, the policy could tend to undermine the nation's war on drugs.

In fact, the Surgeon General has sent a confusing and counter-productive message to the American people. Should millions of tobacco smokers be told that they are addicts and cannot stop? If tobacco is the same as illicit drugs, does that suggest that those drugs should be legalized?

The millions of American men and women who are consumers of tobacco products are not drug addicts. According to the government's own statistics more than 40 million Americans have quit smoking on their own without professional help.

Fifty seven million adult Americans use tobacco and tobacco products. They do not commite crimes in order to get money to buy cigarettes, cigars, pipe or chewing tobacco. They do not beat their spouses and children as a result of smoking too much tobacco. They are not a hazard on the road because of driving while under the influence of tobacco.

No one has ever suggested that tobacco causes the same kind of behavior as illicit drugs or that smokers present the same problems to our society. Yet a warning label regarding nicotine addiction would divert attention away from hard drugs and trivilize the nation's great concern over drug use.

Attached is a summary of the issue, including editorial comment on the Surgeon General's attempt to equate tobacco with hard drugs.

Surgeon General's Report
on Tobacco and Addiction

Surgeon General Koop has concluded that tobacco is addictive and has compared tobacco with "other addicting drugs such as heroin and cocaine."

1. Not all health officials agree with Koop.

A leading French health official and tobacco critic, Professor Albert Hirsch, has made the following public statement about the recent Surgeon General's Report:

"Tobacco cannot be compared to drugs, especially hard drugs like heroin or other narcotics. It is always bad to fight an evil with misstatements or distortions of the truth."

Hirsch is the author of the foreward and conclusion of a Tobacco and Health Committee Report delivered to the French Minister of Health last September, and is noted for his strong antitobacco positions.

2. Koop's conclusions trivialize the war against drugs.

Surgeon General Koop's message that cigarettes are like heroin also includes the reciprocal inference that hard drugs like cocaine and heroin are no different than cigarettes:

- Isn't this likely to encourage hard drug use?
- Isn't this likely to play into the hands of those who favor legalizing hard drugs?

3. Koop's conclusion is contradicted by his own report.

The Surgeon General's Report states that "According to the 1985 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), there are approximately 41 million former smokers in the United States. Approximately 90 percent of former smokers report that they quit smoking without formal treatment programs or smoking cessation devices." (P. 466)

The Surgeon General's report is a compilation of existing literature. No new research is contained in the report. His conclusion conforms with his political goal of a smokeless society and surely was reached long before the report was drafted.

4. Editors across the country disagree with Koop.

"Smoking bears no resemblance to drug abuse or alcohol abuse. Smoking does not affect mental acuity, nor temporarily derange a person, nor produce so much as a lull in anyone's contact with reality."

The Boston Globe

4. Editors across the country disagree with Koop. (con't.)

"Classifying the dangers of nicotine with the horrors of heroin and cocaine is misguided zealotry. It downgrades, even discredits, the nation's campaign against hard drugs..."

"Indeed, the surgeon general's latest attack on smoking is itself generally irresponsible. His enthusiasm has turned to zealotry and is on its way to fanaticism. His concern for the people's health is no longer mixed with a healthy respect for individual rights and individual responsibility."
The Indianapolis Star

"If you have any doubts as to the ridiculousness of Koop's contention, ask yourself a question. How many people have turned to crime to support a tobacco habit?"
The Kansas City Star

"What's most absurd about his report is that it also equates nicotine addiction with addiction of heroin and cocaine. This should do wonders for the government's ongoing 'war' against drugs..."

"What we need is a different warning, to be stamped on every federal document and on every paycheck given to government workers, reading: 'WARNING: Power is addictive. Once you start abusing your office and wasting the taxpayers' money, you may not be able to stop.'"
The Orange County (CA) Register

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Smoking ban on domestic airline flights

On April 23, 1988, the federal law banning smoking on domestic airline flights of two hours or less went into effect. The two-hour ban will sunset on April 23, 1990, unless Congress acts, or the Department of Transportation (DOT) initiates rules to extend or expand the ban. Violations of the ban carry civil penalties of up to \$1,000; tampering with a smoke detector is now a punishable offense with fines of up to \$2,000.

In late September, DOT received bids for the performance of a broad empirical airliner cabin air quality study. The two-phase study, which will consider ventilation issues and a wide range of contaminants and pollution sources, should be underway by March 1989. Phase I (data collection and analysis) results should be available by October 1, 1989; Phase II (risk assessment) should be completed on or around April 1, 1990. Congress is expected to utilize these results in considering sunset of the ban.

In December, DOT informed Congress that it had received nearly 6,000 pieces of correspondence opposing, and only 68 supporting, the ban.

Despite Congressional agreement to a two year trial period terminating in 1990, Congressman Richard Durbin (D-IL), sponsor of the two-hour ban, has indicated he will introduce and press for a total airline smoking ban in 1989. Congress should defer this issue until 1990 when the trial period is over and more information is available.

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Restricting the sale of tobacco products in
commissaries and exchanges

In late 1988, a proposal to remove tobacco products from commissaries and to increase the price of tobacco products sold in exchanges was developed within the offices of the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

The proposal was written at the Deputy Secretary's request by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management and Personnel who oversees the military commissary and exchange systems at the Pentagon. Although the Assistant Secretary drafted the proposal, he personally recommended against such action based on the following arguments:

- 1.) Possible misperceptions by Congress that the Department was trying to circumvent Congress and the likelihood the Congress would invalidate any such directive with legislation in the 101st Congress;
- 2.) The unlikelihood of new appropriations from Congress to replace the loss of operating funds for commissaries generated by the sale of cigarettes; and most significantly
- 3.) The potential negative impact on military personnel benefits, morale and rate of retention.

The proposal also highlighted the fact that the Department's previous efforts through education and smoking restrictions to address the use of tobacco and alcohol in the military had resulted in a substantial reduction in consumption of both items (in excess of ten percent) without a perceived loss of benefits.

Congress can expect varied and continued efforts by the Department to reduce smoking in the military -- through tobacco price increases, tobacco sales restrictions, smoking bans or other means. These efforts will be compounded by those of the individual branches of the military due to the autonomy and authority they each are accorded, i.e. the Department of the Air Force, the Department of the Army and the Department of the Navy.

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Fire-safe cigarettes

The Cigarette Safety Act of 1984 created the Interagency Committee on Cigarette and Little Cigar Fire Safety (IAC) to oversee a study of the technical and commercial feasibility of developing cigarettes and little cigars with a minimum propensity to ignite upholstered furniture and mattresses. The Technical Study Group (TSG), which conducted the study, included the tobacco and furniture industries, fire service organizations, CPSC, National Bureau of Standards, National Cancer Institute, Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In December 1987, the IAC released its recommendations to Congress based on three years of research. The report concluded that certain characteristics of cigarettes could be modified experimentally to reduce their ignition propensity. At the same time, the IAC emphasized that additional work would be needed to assess the actual feasibility of the laboratory modifications as well as associated costs and benefits.

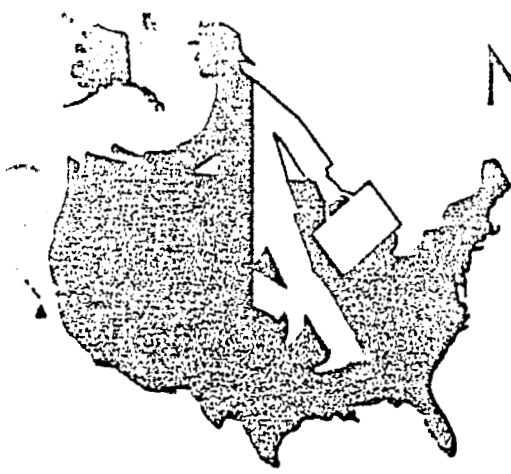
The report recommended establishing an advisory committee of scientists to work with the National Institute of Science and Technology (formerly National Bureau of Standards) to conduct the additional research, including the development of a "validated test method" to measure reliably the propensity of cigarettes to ignite upholstered furniture and mattresses.

Before the release of the final IAC report, Representative Joe Moakley (D-MA) and Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA) introduced legislation mandating the Secretary of HHS to establish fire safety standards for cigarettes to become effective within two years. This legislation basically ignores the recommendations of the IAC and TSG and attempts to regulate science into existence.

In April 1988, Representatives Rick Boucher (D-VA) and Tom Bliley (R-VA) introduced legislation that would implement the IAC recommendations to Congress. In October Senators Albert Gore (D-TN) and John Breaux (D-LA) introduced legislation identical to the Boucher-Bliley bill. The tobacco industry supports this legislation, along with several major national, state and regional fire service organizations. (See the attached National Volunteer Fire Council "Fact Sheet" on the Boucher-Bliley bill.)

After voluntarily participating in the three years of research, the tobacco industry agrees with the IAC recommendation that further research into the applicable standards and commercial manufacture of such tobacco products is necessary in order to guarantee an acceptable and sufficient resolution of the "fire-safe" cigarette issue. The industry will continue to support legislation that would implement the Interagency Committee's recommendations.

National Volunteer Fire Council



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FACT SHEET H.R. 4497

Implementation of Recommendations of the Interagency Committee on Cigarette and Little Cigar Fire Safety.

Summary

In the fall of 1984, the major national fire protection organizations joined with the tobacco industry to support a federal study to determine if, and how, cigarettes might be made more fire safe. With that, the Cigarette Safety Act of 1984 became law.

In December 1987, the Interagency Committee on Cigarette and Little Cigar Fire Safety, which was created by the 1984 Act, reported to Congress that certain characteristics of cigarettes can be modified experimentally to reduce their ignition propensity.

In its report, the Committee made six recommendations. These recommendations included the development of a "validated test method" to measure reliably the propensity of cigarettes to ignite upholstered furniture and mattresses; the testing of smoke from modified cigarettes; data collection and analysis; and continuing research to improve the tracking of cigarette-related fires over time.

Within weeks, legislation was drafted, then refined, to implement the Interagency Committee's recommendations.

By April 1988, Reps. Frederick Boucher (D-VA) and Tom Bliley (R-VA) introduced H.R. 4497, which was then assigned to the Commerce and Energy Committee. Co-sponsors of the bill included Congressional Fire Services Caucus founder Rep. Curt Weldon (R-PA).

The bill will be reintroduced in the 101st Congress.

Endorsements

Many fire service organizations have joined the National Volunteer Fire Council in endorsing the federal legislation and urging its prompt passage. Included are:

- o International Association of Fire Fighters (AFL-CIO)
- o International Society of Fire Service Instructors
- o California State Firemen's Association, Inc.
- o New York State Association of Fire Chiefs
- o Firemen's Association of the State of New York
- o Fire Districts Association of New York
- o Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas
- o Illinois Fire Inspectors Association
- o New Jersey Paid Chiefs Association
- o Keystone State Fire Chiefs Association (Pennsylvania)
- o Pennsylvania State Fire Fighters Association (AFL-CIO)
- o Firemen's Association of the State of Pennsylvania
- o Firemen's Legislative Council of Pennsylvania
- o Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioner, Pennsylvania
Emergency Management Agency
- o Oregon Fire Chiefs' Association
- o Oregon Fire Education Association
- o Oregon State Fire Marshal
- o Washington State Fire Fighters' Association, Inc.
- o Delaware Volunteer Firemen's Association

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