



January 13, 2009

Dear Representative:

We strongly urge Members of the Congress to support passage of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) reauthorization to be voted on in the House this week. This bill reauthorizes SCHIP and pays for an expansion of the program with an increase in the federal tax rates on tobacco products, including a 61-cent increase in the federal cigarette tax.

We have consistently fought for public policies that discourage the use of tobacco by young people and encourage smokers to quit. Research indicates that a ten percent increase in the price of a pack of cigarettes reduces youth smoking by seven percent and overall cigarette consumption by about four percent. An additional significant benefit from reduced smoking would be the health care savings that would accrue to the nation's health care system, including the Medicare and Medicaid programs, from fewer pregnancy complications, fewer heart attacks and strokes, and fewer cases of lung cancer and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Additional public health benefits and cost savings would be achieved by increasing the federal taxes on other tobacco products to parallel rates and we urge you to do this.

We view the increase in the federal tobacco tax rates as the first step of the 111th Congress to significantly address the scourge of tobacco addiction in America. We also hope that you will also support early passage of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (H.R. 1108 in the 110th Congress), to grant the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate production and marketing of tobacco products – a bipartisan measure that in 2008 passed the House of Representative by an overwhelming and bipartisan vote of 326-102. We expect that this legislation will soon be introduced in the 111th Congress and will look to you to cosponsor and support the passage of this bill which will save the lives of children who are targeted by marketing practices of the tobacco industry.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure that the significant public health improvement measures of raising the federal tobacco tax and

granting the FDA the authority to regulate tobacco products and marketing become law.

Sincerely,



Daniel E. Smith
President
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network



Nancy Brown
Chief Executive Officer
American Heart Association



Matthew L. Myers
President
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids



Charles D. Connor
President and CEO
American Lung Association

