

ABC SMOKING CESSATION MONOGRAPH

Smoking is the leading cause of avoidable death globally. Every year about 4 million people die because of smoking and it is estimated that tobacco causes 8.8% of deaths worldwide. The magnitude of this public health challenge is growing and estimates suggest that as many as 10 million people may die from smoking related causes in 2025 worldwide. There are other reasons for great pause and concern relative to cigarette smoking in the United States. The decades-long decline in smoking by Americans has stalled for three years, the first time smoking rates have leveled off for that long since the federal government began collecting statistics more than 40 years ago. Succinctly, the number of Americans giving up cigarettes has hit a wall. A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analysis of 2006 data found that approximately 20.8% of U.S. adults-about 45 million are smokers. Unfortunately, the data in ethnic minorities is worsening. Smoking rates in African Americans, Hispanics and Asians is increasing especially in ethnic minority teens.

The Politics of Smoking

Cigarette companies have been spending billions of dollars to offset tax increases to discount their products and funding has been cut sharply for several very successful state anti-smoking campaigns. The relatively unchanged price of cigarettes since 2002 is considered important because more people stop smoking because of cost than for any other single reason. This is especially true of younger smokers. While some states have increased tobacco taxes, the Bush White House did not raise tobacco tax rates for 8 years.

President Bush strongly opposed a congressional proposal to increase the tax to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). (The above was recently given Presidential approval with a greatly attenuated tobacco tax component).

The Federal government regulates most every product you can name, PHARMACEUTICALS, MEDICAL DEVICES, infant car seats, spinach, pet food and breakfast cereal. Cigarettes are another matter. They go unregulated by the FDA. Simply put, the FDA has no authority over them. In light of this, tobacco use in the United States is growing.

The political landscape in Washington D.C. is ever changing. The power focus has moved from Republicans to Democrats. In the most recent elections there were at least 12 Republican seats in the U.S. Senate "in play" with six of those lost to retirement: Lott, Hagel, Warner, Domenici, Allard and Craig. There were at least 16-24 Republican seats in the U.S. House of Representatives "in play". With this partisan change in power in the country many Republicans are asking, "are people buying what we are selling?" Washington has become a democrat town.

Tuesday 5/19/09, U.S. Senators began debate on legislation that would allow the Food and Drug Administration to regulate cigarettes. Standing in the way, offering bipartisan support are two senators from North Carolina, Republican Richard Burr and Democrat Kay Hagan. North Carolina is the nations top producer of tobacco, growing \$686 million of leaf last year on 12,000 farms.

June 19, 2000 marked the first meeting of the Senate health committee to discuss details of the FAMILY SMOKING PREVENTION and TOBACCO CONTROL ACT of

2009, championed by Sen. Ted Kennedy of MA. The bill could have a sweeping impact on tobacco companies and the marketing of their products. The bill would REQUIRE their tobacco products and ingredients breakdowns registered with the FDA. It would allow the agency to limit the impact of harmful products, through not wipe out entirely addictive ingredients such as nicotine.

The bill also aims to reduce childhood smoking by banning candy-flavored tobacco products, ending advertising near schools and playgrounds, sending vending machines to adult-only establishments and plastering larger warning signs across tobacco packs.

Senators Burr and Hagan are Kennedy's top opponents on the bill. They have issued a warning, hinting at the filibuster to threaten to shut down debate on the Senate Floor. Such a filibuster would be touch to sustain given Democrats' potential 60 vote support of the Senate.

On 5/20/09 Burr put forward his own alternative bill, co-sponsored by Hagan that would create a new agency for tobacco regulation but, without many of the restrictions in the Kennedy bill. Hagan offered two amendments. The first would keep the FDA from forcing manufacturers to make changes that might affect leaf growers. The second would clarify that the FDA cannot directly or indirectly regulate tobacco growers or the leaf itself. This bill comes on the same day of North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue signing into law a bill that prohibits smoking in bars and restaurants. Gov. Perdue called it "an absolutely historic day". **The Association of Black Cardiologists** is an opponent of the

Burr/Hagan bill. **The Association of Black Cardiologist** is a strong supporter of the Kennedy/Waxman bill to create FDA regulation of tobacco.