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CONTACT: Joel Spivak/Ashley Rockhold, 202-296-5469

National Report Ranks New Jersey 38th in Protecting Kids from Tobacco

Washington, DC (December 9, 2009) –New Jersey ranks 38th in the nation in funding programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit, according to a national report released today by a coalition of public health organizations.

New Jersey currently spends \$8.9 million a year on tobacco prevention and cessation programs, which is 7.4 percent of the \$119.8 million recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Last year, New Jersey ranked 39th, spending \$10.2 million on tobacco prevention.

Other key findings for New Jersey include:

- New Jersey this year will collect \$968 million from the 1998 tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, but will spend just 0.9 percent of it on tobacco prevention programs.
- The tobacco companies spend \$226.3 million a year to market their products in New Jersey. This is 26 times what the state spends on tobacco prevention.

The annual report on states' funding of tobacco prevention programs, titled "A Broken Promise to Our Children: The 1998 State Tobacco Settlement 11 Years Later," was released by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Lung Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

New Jersey has implemented several strong policies to reduce tobacco use, including a statewide smoke-free workplace law and a high cigarette tax of \$2.70 a pack. However, New Jersey has fallen short in funding tobacco prevention and cessation programs.

"While New Jersey has implemented some key measures to reduce tobacco use, it is one of the most disappointing states when it comes to funding programs to protect kids from tobacco," said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "To continue making progress, it is critical that New Jersey's leaders increase funding for tobacco prevention. Even in these difficult budget times, tobacco prevention is a smart investment that reduces smoking, saves lives and saves money by reducing tobacco-related health care costs."

In New Jersey, 15.8 percent of high school students smoke, and 9,000 more kids become regular smokers every year. Each year, tobacco claims 11,200 lives and costs the state \$3.2 billion in health care bills.

Eleven years after the 1998 state tobacco settlement, the new report finds that the states this year are collecting record amounts of revenue from the tobacco industry, but are spending less of it on tobacco prevention. Key national findings of the report include:

- The states this year will collect \$25.1 billion from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, but will spend just 2.3 percent of it – \$567.5 million – on tobacco prevention programs. It would take less than 15 percent of their tobacco revenue to fund tobacco prevention programs in every state at CDC-recommended levels.
- In the past year, states have cut funding for tobacco prevention programs by more than 15 percent, or \$103.4 million.

- Only one state – North Dakota – currently funds a tobacco prevention program at the CDC-recommended level.
- Only nine other states fund prevention programs at even half the CDC-recommended amount, while 31 states and DC are providing less than a quarter of the recommended funding.

The report warns that the nation's progress in reducing smoking is at risk unless states increase funding for programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit. The United States has significantly reduced smoking among both youth and adults, but the CDC's most recent survey showed that smoking declines among adults have stalled. Currently 20 percent of high school students and 20.6 percent of adults smoke.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S., killing more than 400,000 people and costing \$96 billion in health care bills each year. Every day, another 1,000 kids become regular smokers – one-third of them will die prematurely as a result.

More information, including the full report and state-specific information, can be obtained at www.tobaccofreekids.org/reports/settlements.