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New Jersey Ranks 46th in Protecting Kids from Tobacco

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17, 2010 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ --New Jersey ranks 46th 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.

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New Jersey currently spends \$600,000 a year on tobacco prevention and cessation programs, which is just 0.5 percent of the \$119.8 million recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Other key findings for New Jersey include:

- In the past three years, New Jersey has virtually eliminated its tobacco prevention program, cutting funding by 95 percent (from \$11 million to \$600,000).
- New Jersey this year will collect \$961 million from the 1998 tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, but will spend just 0.1 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 377 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 12 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's leaders have let down the state's kids and taxpayers by virtually eliminating funding for tobacco prevention programs," said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "Unless the Governor and Legislature act quickly to increase funding for tobacco prevention, New Jersey will pay a high price with more kids smoking, more lives lost to tobacco and higher tobacco-related health care costs. Even in these difficult budget times, tobacco prevention is a smart investment that saves lives and saves money by reducing health care costs."

In New Jersey, 17 percent of high school students smoke, and 10,400 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.

Nationally, the report finds that most states are failing to adequately fund programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit. Altogether, the states have cut funding for these programs to the lowest level since 1999, when they first started receiving tobacco settlement payments. Key national findings of the report include:

- The states this year will collect \$25.3 billion from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, but will spend just two percent of it – \$517.9 million – on tobacco prevention programs.
- States have cut funding for tobacco prevention programs by nine percent (\$51.4 million) in the past year and by 28 percent (\$199.3 million) in the past three years.
- Only two states – Alaska and North Dakota – currently fund tobacco prevention programs at the CDC-recommended level.

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 20.6 percent of adults and 19.5 percent of high school students still 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.

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

SOURCE Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

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