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**Oregon Health Advocates Say New Surgeon General's Report on Immediate Harm from Smoking/Secondhand Smoke Shows Need to Increase Tobacco Tax**

**PORTLAND, OREGON (December 9, 2010)** – Tobacco-Free Coalition of Oregon (TOFCO), a coalition of groups including the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Oregon, Northwest Health Foundation, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, the Oregon Medical Association, the Oregon Nurses Association, Upstream Public Health and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, said a new U.S. Surgeon General's Report on the immediate harm caused by smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke shows why legislators should support a tax increase in funding for tobacco prevention programs in Oregon.

“A recent study found 80 percent of stores that sell cigarettes are located within 1,000 feet of a school. Kids who try to buy tobacco succeed 20 percent of the time. This is unacceptable. Polling shows that, regardless of political party, age, or where they live in the state, voters across Oregon understand that raising the cigarette tax is a smart way to protect our kids from tobacco and make the state a healthier place to live,” said Brett Hamilton, executive director of the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Oregon, Inc (TOFCO).

“The Surgeon General's report is the most highly respected scientific authority on smoking and health, and this report's conclusion is crystal clear for youth and for smokers: If you do not smoke, don't start. There is no safe level of smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke. If you do smoke, try to quit immediately and get the help you need to succeed,” said Chuck Tauman, president of TOFCO, Inc, “This report eliminates any excuse for failing to significantly increase Oregon's cigarette tax, which is a proven way to prevent kids from smoking and motivate smokers to quit. Increasing the tobacco tax is one of the most effective ways to protect our state's health and prevent deadly and costly diseases such as cancer and heart attacks.”

The new report found that smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke cause immediate harm to the human body, triggering physical changes that lead to cancer, heart attacks, lung disease and many other serious illnesses, including damage to the reproductive systems of both men and women.

The report also finds that design changes have made cigarettes more addictive over time. Today's cigarettes deliver nicotine more efficiently to the brain, addicting kids more quickly and making it harder for smokers to quit.

The Surgeon General's report details the serious health effects of even brief exposure to tobacco smoke. It concludes that:

- Tobacco smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, including hundreds that are toxic and at least 70 that cause cancer.
- Every exposure to the cancer-causing chemicals in tobacco smoke can damage DNA in a way that leads to cancer.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke has an immediate adverse impact on the cardiovascular system, damaging blood vessels, making blood more likely to clot and increasing risks for heart attack and stroke.
- Smoking makes it harder for women to get pregnant and can cause miscarriage, premature birth and low birth weight. It also harms male fertility.

In the report, Surgeon General Regina Benjamin states, “There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Every inhalation of tobacco smoke exposes our children, our families, and our loved ones to dangerous chemicals that can damage their bodies and result in life-threatening diseases such as cancer and heart disease.”

Tobacco-use continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in Oregon and is associated with a number of diseases including multiple cancers, strokes and diseases of the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Tobacco use accounts for over 6,900 Oregonian premature deaths and costs the state more than \$2 billion a year. Despite the well-known threats of smoking, 16 percent of high school students continue to smoke and declines in the state’s adult smoking rate have stalled.

The report and related materials can be found at [www.surgeongeneral.gov](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov).

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