

Faith United Against Tobacco



August 16, 2006

Dear State Legislators:

We are writing on behalf of Faith United Against Tobacco, a coalition of more than twenty national denominations and faith organizations working to save lives by reducing tobacco use, which is the leading preventable cause of death in our country. Our request is simple: Please protect our children from tobacco addiction and help smokers quit by funding state tobacco prevention and cessation programs at levels recommended for each state by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

As members of faith communities, we spend too much time burying fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers whose lives are tragically cut short by tobacco-caused disease. Faith communities have long played a critical role in addressing our nation's social challenges, especially in protecting children. Helping to reduce tobacco use is a natural extension of these efforts.

Tobacco use takes a tremendous toll in the United States, killing more than 400,000 Americans and costing more than \$180 billion in health care costs and lost productivity each year. Government expenditures for tobacco-related health care will cost each family in America \$525 in increased taxes this year alone.

The good news is that we know how to reduce tobacco's toll by funding programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit. We know these programs work to reduce smoking, save lives and save money by reducing smoking-caused health care costs. The best state tobacco prevention programs have reduced youth smoking rates by 60 percent or more in just a few short years. It has been documented that for every one dollar spend on prevention programs, states save up to three dollars of health care costs incurred by a smoking-related illness.

Unfortunately, too many states do not fund tobacco prevention programs at even minimum levels recommended by the CDC despite the fact that properly funding such programs would require just a fraction of the more than \$20 billion a year the states collect in tobacco-generated revenue from the 1998 state tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes. Currently, only four states fund such programs at CDC-recommended levels, and more than two-thirds of the states do not even provide half of what the CDC recommends. Surely our states can do more to combat the leading preventable cause of death facing our communities and our families.

It is our understanding that beginning in 2008 the states will have another excellent opportunity to properly fund tobacco prevention programs because they will be receiving more than \$900 million in annual bonus payments under the terms of the 1998 tobacco settlement. We urge leaders in every state to take advantage of this second chance to keep the promise of the tobacco settlement and utilize the new revenue to fund tobacco prevention and cessation programs at levels recommended by the CDC.

This year, more than 545,000 of our kids will become regular smokers. That is 545,000 kids too many. Please do the right thing and fund programs that will protect our children from tobacco addiction and save lives. Our children and families are counting on you.

If you have any further questions about Faith United Against Tobacco please contact Vincent DeMarco, FUAT Coordinator, at 1-410-235-9000, or visit our website at www.FaithUnitedAgainstTobacco.org.

Sincerely,



James Winkler, General Secretary
General Board of Church and Society United Methodist Church



Dr. DeWitt Williams, Director
Health Ministries, North American Division
Seventh-day Adventists

Attachment 1: List of denominations collaborating with Faith United Against Tobacco (FUAT)

Faith United Against Tobacco



List of denominations collaborating with Faith United Against Tobacco (FUAT)

American Baptist Churches of the South
American Muslim Foundation
C.A.B. Outreach Ministries, Inc.
Christian Methodist Episcopal
Church of the Brethren
Church Women United
Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Health Ministries Association
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, Tobacco Program
Interfaith Health Program
International Parish Nurse Resource Center
Interreligious Coalition on Smoking or Health
Islamic Society of North America
Midwest Province of St. Joseph Order of Friars Minor, Capuchin
National Council of Churches of Christ
National Episcopal Health Ministries
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Progressive National Baptist Convention
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ – Justice and Witness Covenanted Ministry
United Methodist Church, Women’s Division
United Methodist General Board of Church and Society
Woman’s Christian Temperance Union
World Sikh Council - America Region (WSC-AR)