



May 1, 2003

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson:

On March 1 2003, representatives of the United States government along with delegates from 170 other nations completed negotiations on a text for the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The meeting agreed that the text would be transmitted to the Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly in May 2003 for adoption.

The successful negotiation of the FCTC is a landmark event in public health. Addressing the single largest preventable epidemic in the world, the treaty, as negotiated, has the potential to save millions of lives in the decades to come.

During the closing session of the negotiations, the United States delegation indicated that it may seek to reopen the negotiations at the World Health Assembly in May. It is our understanding that the U.S. is now formally requesting other governments to support a change in the treaty to allow countries to opt out of any provision. We are writing to urge you not to pursue this course. We support the treaty in its current form and believe that as drafted it has the potential to make a major difference in the battle to fight the global impact of tobacco. An effort to weaken or otherwise change the treaty by the United States would undermine this critical public health initiative and needlessly antagonize the many countries that worked hard to find compromise and still produce a strong treaty. Instead, we ask that the United States join the vast majority of countries and allow the treaty in its current state to move forward.

If the United States is unable to sign or ratify the FCTC at this time, it will remain vitally important for the U.S. to demonstrate its commitment to international tobacco control efforts. The Office on Smoking and Health at the CDC has contributed immeasurably to these efforts through the Global Youth Tobacco Survey, capacity-building programs with other large-population countries including India and Mexico, and the funding that the U.S. has provided to WHO and its regional offices. We urge you to do all that you can to strengthen and expand these programs.

Sincerely,

PARTNERS FOR EFFECTIVE TOBACCO POLICY COALITION

American Cancer Society
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Medical Association

Action on Smoking and Health
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Association for Respiratory Care
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Medical Women's Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Thoracic Society
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church
Interreligious Coalition on Smoking OR Health
Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco Prevention
Mautner Project
National Association of Local Boards of Health
Oncology Nursing Society
Partnership for Prevention
Society of Public Health Education