



November 28, 2001

Tommy Thompson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson:

The National Cancer Institute today released a comprehensive new report detailing the 50-year history of light and low-tar cigarettes and their impact on the public health. The report concludes, "Epidemiological and other scientific evidence, including patterns of mortality from smoking-caused diseases, does not indicate a benefit to public health from changes in cigarette design and manufacturing over the last fifty years." The report further concludes that the marketing of these products as lower delivery and lower risk is "deceptive" and the fact that smokers choose these products as an alternative to quitting makes this deception an "urgent public health issue."

There are two clear messages, behind which the entire public health community stands united, to be taken from this groundbreaking new report:

- 1) If smokers are concerned about their health, there is only one solution – to quit smoking. There is no significant health difference between any of the cigarettes currently on the market. Misunderstanding of the health implications of the terms "light" and "low-tar" have led millions of Americans to use these products thinking they were safer. It is critical that a major public education campaign be initiated to counter these misconceptions.
- 2) The terms "light", low tar" and "ultra light" are deceptive and should be eliminated. It is time to end the special exemption tobacco receives from oversight by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Congress should grant the FDA authority to regulate tobacco products, including the ability to ban the terms "light", "ultra-light" and "low-tar."

To bolster our efforts to prompt Congress to take action on this vital public health issue, we call upon you and the Administration to support our efforts for effective FDA regulation of tobacco products, including the ability to ban the terms "light", "ultra-light" and "low-tar." Based on the evidence and the fact that the NCI characterizes this as "an urgent public health issue", we urge you and the Administration to support effective FDA regulation such as that contained in bills introduced in Congress by Senators Harkin, Chafee and Graham (S. 247) and Representatives Ganske, Dingell, and Waxman (H.R. 1097).

Sincerely,

John R. Seffrin, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
American Cancer Society

M. Cass Wheeler
Chief Executive Officer
American Heart Association

John L. Kirkwood
Chief Executive Officer
American Lung Association

Matthew L. Myers
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