



BIG SURPRISE: TOBACCO COMPANY PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS DON'T WORK; MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO

For decades, tobacco companies have launched their own so-called youth prevention campaigns virtually every time they are faced with legislation, regulation, or litigation that they know will reduce smoking. Their latest campaigns aimed at youth and parents are simply the latest incarnation of thinly disguised public relations efforts to influence public opinion and policy makers rather than smoking behavior.

After years of these efforts, three things are quite clear:

- No tobacco company campaign has EVER produced any evidence that it prevents kids from smoking or helps smokers quit. In fact, evidence from several recent studies confirms that these programs are ineffective at best and even work to ENCOURAGE kids to smoke.
- The goals of the industry campaigns are not to reduce smoking, and the targets of the campaigns are not kids or smokers. The tobacco companies' own documents reveal that these campaigns are merely part of their ongoing efforts to convince policy makers NOT to enact those policies and programs that actually reduce tobacco use.
- While foisting these fake prevention campaigns on the public, the tobacco companies have dramatically increased their marketing expenditures that promote smoking, much of it in ways that influence youth to smoke. They spend additional untold millions to oppose tobacco taxes, smoke-free laws, and funding for tobacco prevention programs, all of which are proven to reduce smoking among youth and adults and/or protect everyone from the harms of secondhand smoke.

Evidence that Tobacco Industry Funded Prevention Programs are Ineffective at Best, Harmful at Worst

Research studies show that tobacco companies' campaigns don't prevent youth from smoking.

- A study published in 2009 found that youth who recalled Philip Morris' "Think. Don't Smoke" advertisements had more favorable beliefs and attitudes towards cigarette companies, and those beliefs increased even after that campaign went off-air. In addition, youth recalling the industry ads were less likely to say that they would not smoke within the next year.¹
- A 2006 study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that the industry's "prevention" ads targeted at youth are ineffective and do not change smoking outcomes, while industry ads targeted at parents increase the likelihood that kids will smoke. Among 10th and 12th graders, higher exposure to the parent-targeted ads was associated with lower perceived harm of smoking, stronger approval of smoking, stronger intentions to smoke in the future, and a greater likelihood of having smoked in the past 30 days.²
- In an exhaustive review of relevant studies, a comprehensive report released in June 2008 by the National Cancer Institute, *The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use*, confirmed that tobacco industry-sponsored youth smoking prevention programs are "generally ineffective" at reducing youth smoking and may have caused some youth to start smoking.³
- A systematic review of mass media campaigns on youth smoking published in 2008, found that tobacco industry-funded youth prevention campaigns have minimal impact on youth smoking because they avoid the most powerful anti-tobacco themes of health effects and industry manipulation.⁴ Industry youth prevention media campaigns that position smoking as an adult habit or as a "choice" and ignore the consequences of smoking are not effective, and in fact may undermine the effects of aggressive media campaigns.⁵ Industry ads that use a "choice" theme and focus on refusal messages appear to have no effect on preventing smoking initiation, do not resonate with teens, and do not appear to offer any compelling reason not to smoke.⁶ The 2008 review found that tobacco industry youth prevention campaigns may actually undermine tobacco control efforts because they improve the tobacco industry's public image.⁷
- Researchers found that youth exposed to Philip Morris' "Think. Don't Smoke" advertisements had more favorable feelings toward the tobacco industry compared to youth who were not exposed to

the ads. This finding supports the assertion that the purpose of this campaign was not to prevent youth smoking, but rather to buy respectability and favor among youth.⁸

- Lorillard heavily promoted its “youth smoking prevention” campaign, “Tobacco is Whacko...If You're A Teen,” despite lack of evidence that it has ever had any impact whatsoever on teens. The “Tobacco is Whacko...If You're A Teen,” slogan framed smoking as an adult activity, which, as tobacco industry documents recognize, is an effective way to appeal to kids and can tempt teens to try smoking.
- Experts expressed serious concerns that the manner in which the “Tobacco is Whacko” campaign was framed encouraged young people to smoke as an act of rebellion rather than discouraging tobacco use.
- A 2000 study by the California Department of Health Services showed that the much publicized “We Card” program, promoted by the tobacco industry as a voluntary means to keep underage kids from purchasing tobacco products, had little or no effect on underage tobacco sales. The California data for 1998 and 1999 demonstrated that the rate of illegal underage sales for stores with “We Card” and other tobacco industry signs was much higher than stores with government signs prohibiting illegal sales to minors; compliance increased only when the tobacco industry signs were coupled with government signs.⁹

U.S. District Court Judge Gladys Kessler's Final Opinion reiterates that tobacco companies' prevention programs are ineffective.

In her landmark opinion in 2006, finding the tobacco companies guilty of lying to the American people and marketing their deadly and addictive products to our children, Judge Kessler was very specific in finding that industry youth prevention programs have no merit. According to Judge Kessler:

- “Defendants never recommend that parents inform their children that smoking kills more than 400,000 people each year, involves an addiction that most smokers desire to end, and will harm those around the smoker. Nor do Defendants ever suggest that parents, as role models for their children, stop smoking.”¹⁰
- “Defendants' ‘youth programs’ and youth smoking prevention efforts are not only minimally funded -- given the vast sums they spend on marketing and promotion to youth -- and understaffed both qualitatively and quantitatively, but no efforts have been made to validate their effectiveness amongst the total population.”¹¹
- “[B]oth Lorillard's and Philip Morris's media campaigns promote the message that smoking is an adult decision. Emphasizing that smoking is an adult activity underscores the desirability of engaging in adult behavior for adolescents who are particularly motivated to appear mature.”¹²

Even advertising critics see through tobacco companies' youth prevention campaigns

- *ADWEEK* columnist Barbara Lippert wrote: “[T]hese ads are too tepid and generic — they could sell anything from orange juice to toothpaste. . . PM has chosen to create a mellow, sensitive, ‘rely on your good sense, son’ picture. Are they serious? This is advertising covering a life-and-death issue! So where is the big stick? The scare tactics? The hit ‘em over your head with destroying life stuff?”¹³
- *USA Today* advertising columnist Bruce Horowitz placed Philip Morris' new campaign on his “Worst Ads of 1998” list. He wrote: “This is Philip Morris' jaded attempt at PR. Three spots with kids who say smoking isn't cool. . . . Philip Morris says it wants kids to stop smoking. Right. Just like Bill Gates wants kids to stop staring at computer screens.”¹⁴
- Fred Goldberg, chairman-CEO of Goldberg Moser O'Neill, an advertising agency in San Francisco, wrote in *Advertising Age*: “I call it unmitigated gall and hypocrisy; incredible and disheartening. It is another reflection of the distorted values and warped standards that exist today more than ever.”¹⁵

The Real Reason Tobacco Companies Have Youth Prevention Campaigns

Tobacco companies launch youth anti-smoking campaigns as public relations efforts to discourage regulation and public action to reduce smoking, such as litigation or legislation, with the goal to improve

their public image and reduce opportunities for opponents to impose restraints on industry practices. Their targets, then, are not youths or parents of youths, but policymakers and the general public. It is likely that a key motivation is to discourage Congress and state legislatures from enacting measures such as tobacco taxes, smoke-free laws, and funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs that they know and that sciences tells us will reduce smoking among both youth and adults.

- From Judge Kessler's Final Opinion: "Internal documents suggest that Defendants designed their YSP [youth smoking prevention] programs for public relations rather than efficacy in youth smoking prevention."¹⁶
- From a 1991 Tobacco Institute discussion paper: "The youth [anti-smoking] program and its individual parts support the Institute's objective of discouraging unfair and counterproductive federal, state, and local restrictions on cigarette advertising, by: (a) providing on-going and persuasive evidence that the industry is actively discouraging youth smoking and independent verification that the industry's efforts are valid; (b) Reinforcing the belief that peer pressure -- not advertising -- is the cause of youth smoking [and] (c) Seizing the political center and forcing the antismokers to an extreme."¹⁷
- In a 1995 draft speech, Philip Morris present and CEO Joseph J. Morgan stated, "The bottom line to all this is, I repeat, if we don't do something fast to project that sense of industry responsibility regarding the youth access issue, we are going to be looking at severe marketing restrictions in a very short time. Those restrictions will pave the way for equally severe legislation or regulation on where adults are allowed to smoke. We need to do something to demonstrate industry agreement, concern and action on the youth-access issue...."¹⁸
- From a 1992 Philip Morris document: "[If Philip Morris took] a more progressive position on tobacco, it would enable the company to move onto a higher moral playing field, to neutralize the tobacco issue and to focus attention on other, more appealing products."¹⁹

The Industry Continues to Market Its Products Aggressively

As noted previously, marketing by tobacco companies has increased dramatically since the tobacco settlement, reaching a record \$12.8 billion per year – \$35.2 million a day – in 2006 (the most recent year for which complete data is available).²⁰ If tobacco companies really wanted to reduce youth smoking, they would stop their aggressive marketing tactics and stop opposing the policies and programs that actually work to reduce smoking.

- Judge Kessler stated, "Philip Morris continues to increase its marketing expenditures in grossly disproportionate amounts to its spending on youth smoking prevention. Philip Morris's 2003 Financial Forecast Budget includes a budget of \$110 million for youth smoking prevention, \$8.9 million greater than its 2002 spending, 'primarily due to increased spending for adult cessation programs.' In contrast, in that year, Philip Morris spent more than \$7.1 billion on sales incentives and product promotions."²¹
- According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), in 2003, cigarette companies increased their product marketing and promotional spending to \$15.15 billion, while lowering their spending on youth smoking prevention programs to \$72.9 million.²² In other words, tobacco companies spent more than 200 times on product marketing than on prevention.

Tobacco Companies Continue to Oppose Real Prevention Programs and Other Policies that Reduce Smoking

The 2008 NCI report on tobacco use and the media describes the great lengths the tobacco industry will go to influence tobacco control media interventions. Tobacco companies obstruct state anti-tobacco media campaigns by lobbying elected officials to reduce or eliminate funding for these programs, by attempting to weaken the campaign messages or reduce the size of their target audiences and by arguing that state anti-tobacco media campaigns are a waste of taxpayer dollars because they duplicate the industry's own tobacco prevention campaigns – which, as proven above, are ineffective.²³

Below are a few examples of major efforts by tobacco companies to thwart tobacco control measures at the ballot.

- According to state campaign contribution reports, in 2006, Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds and other tobacco interests spent at least \$70.1 million in California and Missouri to oppose state ballot initiatives that would use revenues from a tobacco tax increase to fund proven-effective state youth prevention programs. The industry's money bought a barrage of deceptive television ads that misled voters about the impact of these initiatives, going so far as to claim that the initiatives did not provide enough money for tobacco prevention when in fact they would have given California and Missouri two of the best-funded tobacco prevention programs in the country.
- In 2006, tobacco companies launched a major effort to thwart a proposed \$1-a-pack increase on the state cigarette tax in Texas. Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds conducted an anti-tax campaign that consisted of radio commercials, newspaper ads and computer-generated phone calls to lawmakers. In addition, according to Texans for Public Justice, which monitors lobby influence in Austin, tobacco companies spent at least \$1.4 million lobbying the state legislature against the tax increase.²⁴
- In 2006, R.J. Reynolds spent \$7.1 million in Arizona to deter voters from supporting a ballot initiative that would make bars smoke-free and another \$5.4 million towards defeating a similar ballot initiative in Ohio.²⁵ Voters rejected these multi-million dollar campaigns by the tobacco industry and sent a loud and clear message to elected officials at all levels: Reject the special interests of the tobacco industry and protect the public interest by supporting proven measures to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke.
- In 2007, tobacco industries spent a record \$12 million – or \$24 per vote – to defeat a ballot initiative to raise Oregon's tobacco tax and fund health care for uninsured children.²⁶

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, May 19, 2011 / Ann Boonn

More factsheets on tobacco industry marketing to kids and other “bad acts” are available at http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/fact_sheets/industry/.

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⁵ American Legacy Foundation, *Getting to the Truth: Assessing Youths’ Reactions to the truthsm and ‘Think. Don’t Smoke’ Tobacco Countermarketing Campaigns*, First Look Report 9, June 2002. Sly, D & Heald, G, *Florida Anti-tobacco Media Evaluation (FAME) Follow-up Report*, February 2001. Teenage Research Unlimited, “Counter-Tobacco Advertising Exploratory,” Summary Report, January-March 1999.

⁶ Teenage Research Unlimited, “Counter-Tobacco Advertising Exploratory,” Summary Report, January-March 1999.

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⁸ American Legacy Foundation, *Getting to the Truth: Assessing Youths’ Reactions to the truthsm and ‘Think. Don’t Smoke’ Tobacco Countermarketing Campaigns*, First Look Report 9, June 2002.

⁹ Cowling, DC & Robins, DG, “Rate of Illegal Tobacco Sales to Minors Varies by Sign Type in California,” Research Letters, *American Journal of Public Health* 90(11):1792-1793, 2000.

¹⁰ *U.S. V. Philip Morris USA, Inc., et al.*, No. 99-CV-02496GK (U.S. Dist. Ct., D.C.), Final Opinion, p. 1171, paragraph 3179, August 17, 2006, http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/content/what_we_do/industry_watch/doj/FinalOpinion.pdf.

¹¹ *U.S. V. Philip Morris USA, Inc., et al.*, No. 99-CV-02496GK (U.S. Dist. Ct., D.C.), Final Opinion, p. 1164, paragraph 3157, August 17, 2006, http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/content/what_we_do/industry_watch/doj/FinalOpinion.pdf.

¹² *U.S. V. Philip Morris USA, Inc., et al.*, No. 99-CV-02496GK (U.S. Dist. Ct., D.C.), Final Opinion, p. 1168, paragraph 3168, August 17, 2006, http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/content/what_we_do/industry_watch/doj/FinalOpinion.pdf.

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¹⁸ 6-page draft Philip Morris speech, "JJM to PM Invitational Importance of Youth Issue," Feb 10, 1995, Bates No. 2044046017/6022.

¹⁹ Hill and Knowlton, *Philip Morris Corporate Affairs Strategic Plan for 1993*, December 3, 1992, Bates No. 2023586677/6725.

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