**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 16, 2018**

**CONTACTS: Natalie Talis, 202-868-4813**

 **Mina Radman, 202-296-5469**

**California Kids to ‘Kick Butts’ on March 21**

***State Leaders Challenged to Create First Tobacco-Free Generation***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in California will unite against tobacco use on March 21 as they join thousands of young people nationwide to mark Kick Butts Day. More than 1,000 events are planned across the United States for this annual day of youth activism, sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. (See below for a list of local events.)

On Kick Butts Day, kids encourage their peers to be tobacco-free, reject tobacco companies’ devious marketing and urge elected officials to help make the next generation tobacco-free.

This year, Kick Butts Day is focusing attention on the progress the U.S. has made in reducing youth smoking and the actions needed to create the first tobacco-free generation. Since 2000, the national smoking rate among high school students has fallen by 71 percent (from 28 percent in 2000 to 8 percent in 2016). However, the fight against tobacco is far from over:

* Tobacco use is still the No. 1 cause of preventable death in the U.S., killing over 480,000 people and costing about $170 billion in health care expenses each year.
* Tobacco companies spend $8.9 billion a year – $1 million every hour – to market tobacco products in the U.S., often in ways that appeal to kids.
* Electronic cigarettes have become the most popular tobacco product used by kids – nationwide, 11.3 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes compared to 8 percent who smoke cigarettes. The latest trend with teens is JUUL, an e-cigarette that looks like a computer flash drive and comes in flavors like mango and fruit medley.

In California, tobacco use claims 40,000 lives and costs $13.29 billion in health care bills each year. Currently, 4.3 percent of California’s high school students smoke.

On Kick Butts Day, kids and health advocates are calling on elected officials to implement proven strategies that make up a “roadmap to a tobacco-free generation.” These strategies include tobacco tax increases, comprehensive smoke-free laws, raising the tobacco sale age to 21, well-funded tobacco prevention programs and banning the sale of flavored tobacco products.

“On Kick Butts Day, kids are celebrating the progress we’ve made to reduce tobacco use and building momentum to get us across the finish line,” said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “Elected leaders in every state can help create the first tobacco-free generation by supporting proven strategies to prevent youth tobacco use.”

On Kick Butts Day, kids join in creative events ranging from classroom activities to educate their peers about the harmful ingredients in cigarettes to rallies at state capitols.

In California, activities include:

The **Del Norte Health and Human Services Tobacco Use Prevention Program** will hold an interactive carnival at the **Del Norte Fairgrounds.** Kids will learn about the dangers of tobacco use through a photo booth, relay races, and a “Tar Jar” station. Time: 4 PM. Location: 421 US Highway 101, Crescent City. Contact: Amber Wier (707) 951-2914.

Students from **Santa Barbara City College** will display giant cigarettes to symbolize the 1,300 daily tobacco related deaths in the United States. Students will be invited to share personal stories about how tobacco has impacted their lives. Time: 10 AM. Location: 721 Cliff Drive, Santa Barbara. Contact: Katy Magnani (425) 830-4771.

**Sun Street Centers** in **Salinas** will hold an interactive resource fair at **Cesar Chavez Library.** Kids will learn about the dangers of tobacco use through games, parents will receive information about tobacco, and all will be able to take a pledge to not use tobacco products. Time: 3:30 PM. Location: 615 Williams Road, Salinas. Contact: Katia Lainez Gutierrez (831) 223-6246.

Students at **Lathrop High School** will hold activities to reach out to the student body and educate them about the harmful ingredients and effects of cigarettes. Time: 12:40 AM. Location: 647 Spartan Way, Lathrop. Contact: Laura Freret (209) 481-0064.

On March 23, **Tobacco-Use Prevention Education (TUPE)** members at **Hopkins Junior High** in **Fremont** will commit to be tobacco-free and encourage peers to quit smoking. They will display their commitment to living tobacco-free by spelling out their pledge using cups in a fence. Time: 11:50 AM. Location: 600 Driscoll Road, Fremont. Contact: Amalia Kim (510) 828-7917.

**Denair High School** students are taking a stand against tobacco by holding a morning flash mob to rally for tobacco-free living. In the afternoon, they will continue working to create a smoke-free community by organizing a cigarette butt cleanup. Time: 11 AM. Location: 3431 Lester Road, Denair. Contact: Melissa Treadwell (209) 216-8550.

On March 22, students in the **Protecting Health And Slamming Tobacco (PHAST) Club** at **Del Puerto High School, Patterson High School,** and **Open Vally Independent Study** will encourage their peers to pledge to be tobacco free. They will also organize a cigarette butt cleanup, starting at Patterson High School and ending at the Patterson Skatepark. Time: 12 PM. Location: 640 M Street, Patterson. Contact: James Hensley (209) 892-4711.

All events will take place March 21 unless otherwise indicated. For a full list of Kick Butts Day activities in California, visit [www.kickbuttsday.org/map](http://www.kickbuttsday.org/map). Additional information about tobacco, including state-by-state statistics, can be found at [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org).