

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: April 30, 1999

Governor's Weekly Radio Message Discusses Anti-Smoking Billboards

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week Governor Whitman discusses New Jersey's new anti-smoking billboard campaign. Each year, more than 30,000 young people in New Jersey start smoking. The State's concern for the health of New Jersey's youth was one of the reasons New Jersey joined with other states in suing the major tobacco companies. The settlement means that New Jersey will receive about \$300 million from tobacco companies every year.

Over \$18 million of those funds will go toward helping young adults keep away from tobacco. Several provisions in the settlement discourage smoking by restricting tobacco advertising. Tobacco companies have agreed to stop outdoor billboard advertising as of this month. The companies also agreed to allow states to use the remaining time on the billboard leases. Some of the \$18 million of the settlement funds set aside for programs to keep young adults away from smoking will be used to convert these billboards to be used in the campaign against youth smoking. Every tobacco industry billboard that is replaced sends the message to young people that smoking is dangerous.

.Attached is the text of the message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend.

GOVERNOR'S WEEKLY RADIO MESSAGE APRIL 30, 1999 ANTI-SMOKING BILLBOARDS

Did you know that 90 percent of all new smokers are younger than 18 years of age?

Did you know that each year more than 30,000 young people in New Jersey start smoking?

Why do so many of our young people start such a dangerous habit?

They probably think smoking will help them fit in with their peers or appear more grown up - and that's exactly what cigarette advertisers want them to think.

From Joe Camel to the Marlboro Man, there's no doubt that our children have been specifically targeted by the tobacco industry's marketing and promotional campaigns.

Our concern for the health of our children was one of the principle reasons New Jersey joined with other states in suing the major tobacco companies. The settlement of that suit means that New Jersey is going to get about 300 million dollars from tobacco companies every year.

These funds will help our state recover some of the money we've spent on smoking-related illnesses and help us improve the health of New Jersey's families.

For example, over 18 million dollars will go toward helping young people and adults keep away from tobacco.

Through programs such as our youth media campaign entitled, "Smoking. Don't Get Sucked In", we will encourage young people to stay away from cigarettes or, if they are already smoking, to quit the habit.

The best news is that the tobacco industry will help us to get our message out to young people.

The settlement agreement contains several provisions to protect our children and discourage smoking by restricting tobacco advertising.

Under the settlement, tobacco companies agreed to stop outdoor billboard advertising as of April 22. What's more, the companies agreed to allow states like New Jersey to use the remaining time on the billboard leases.

Billboards were always a highly visible part of cigarette advertising campaigns. As of April 23, those same billboards become a part of our campaign - our campaign against youth smoking.

Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the United States. It is associated with heart disease, cancer, stroke, and respiratory disease.

With every tobacco industry billboard we replace, we will help send the message that smoking is dangerous. If we all work together, we can help our young people say no to smoking and yes to a healthier life.