

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
609-777-2600

RELEASE: February 5, 1999

Governor's Weekly Radio Message Addresses the Dangers of Smoking

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 the Governor discusses smoking as an addictive habit that has been shown to cause such diseases as cancer, heart disease and emphysema. Recently, New Jersey joined with other states in suing the major tobacco companies to recover some of the money that has been spent on smoking related illnesses. As a result of the suit, New Jersey will receive about \$300 million from those companies every year. The Governor announced in her budget address that a large part of that money would be spent for improving the health of New Jersey families by doing more cancer screenings and helping people provide care for their aging parents at home instead of having to send them to a nursing home. She also proposed spending over \$18 million dollars to help adults and young people stay away from using tobacco.

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 ADDRESS FEBRUARY 5, 1999 ANTI-SMOKING MESSAGE

Each year, in the United States, smoking kills more people than fires, AIDS, car accidents, and murders combined.

The fact is that most adult smokers started when they were kids. And that trend is continuing.

Why do they start? It might be peer pressure. It might be the excitement of taking risks. But it almost certainly has something to do with the powerful media messages they get from the tobacco industry.

No matter what the image is -- whether it's the cowboy riding into the sunset or the couple by the swimming pool or Joe Camel - they all have one thing in common: they try to convince the audience that there is something glamorous about smoking.

Not only is smoking not glamorous, but it is a very dangerous and addictive habit. A habit that has been shown to cause such diseases as cancer, heart disease, and emphysema.

As you may know, New Jersey joined with other states in suing the major tobacco companies to recover some of the money we've spent on smoking related illnesses. As a result of that suit, our state is going to get about 300 million dollars from those companies every year.

In my Budget Address, last month, I announced that we would use a substantial portion of this money for improving the health of New Jersey families.

We will, for example, do more cancer screenings, especially in minority communities where people often wait too long to get help in fighting cancer. We will also help more families take care of their parents at home as they get old, instead of having to send them to a nursing home.

We owe it to those who died as a result of their addiction to cigarettes to prevent as many of our citizens, especially our kids, from meeting the same fate. That's why I proposed that, this year, we invest over 18 million dollars to help adults and young people keep away from tobacco.

Through programs such as our Youth Anti-Smoking Awareness Campaign, we will encourage young people to stay away from cigarettes or, if they're already smoking, to quit the habit.

But, we have a lot of work ahead of us. Each year, more than 30,000 young people in New Jersey start smoking. I am sure most of them think that someday they will simply quit. But, for most people it's not that easy; they become addicted.

Now here's the good news: studies have shown that if you don't start smoking by age 18 the chances are overwhelming that you won't ever start.

That's why we have to be a lot more assertive in getting our message out to our young people. We have to educate our youngsters about the danger of cigarettes, before smoking becomes a habit.

If we all work together, we can help our children say no to smoking and eliminate one of the biggest threats to their health.