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NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Whitman Applauds Tobacco Settlement Urges Anti-Smoking Efforts and Dedication of Funds

NJ Gov. Christie Whitman today welcomed the news of the proposed settlement in New Jersey's suit against the tobacco industry. She suggested that the proceeds of the settlement be deposited into health care trust funds when she issued the following statement:

"We filed our suit because we were particularly concerned about the health of our children, who have been specifically targeted by the tobacco industry's marketing and promotional efforts.

"I am pleased that the proposed settlement contains several provisions designed to protect teenagers and discourage teen smoking by restricting advertising, promotions and marketing.

"This agreement builds upon many of our existing initiatives including our rigorous enforcement of New Jersey's age of sale requirements and our public education and awareness programs.

"Importantly, this agreement will reimburse New Jersey taxpayers in an amount more than \$7 billion. I will recommend to the Legislature that these funds be deposited in health care trust funds and used entirely for funding public health programs and meeting New Jersey's health care needs.

"Every penny of these funds should be used for health purposes including prevention programs and counter advertising to protect kids, cessation programs and community partnerships to serve those who have already put their health at risk by smoking, in addition to existing important health programs such as charity care and KidCare.

"I have asked the Commissioner of Health and Senior Services for his input on the most effective elements of a comprehensive program to curb teen smoking and to deal with current and future smoking-related health problems in New Jersey.

"Once the agreement is signed, I will ask the legislative leaders to meet with me so that we may discuss the appropriate expenditure of these funds.

"We are still reviewing the fine print of the proposed agreement. However, all initial indications are that we will be able to sign it by the end of this week. The agreement will allow us to end the legal bickering and get on with realistic, concrete and workable programs.

Of course, litigation can never take the place of thoughtful and comprehensive legislation. It is unfortunate that Congress has not been able to enact legislation in this area. However, I remain hopeful that the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives will coalesce around legislation that goes beyond the scope of this agreement," she said.