



News Release

For Immediate Release: March 11, 2008

Contact: Macon Morehouse (202-724-3303; mmorehouse@aap.org)
Priscilla Ring (202-724-3304; pring@aap.org)

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS URGES SWIFT ACTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL LEGISLATION

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Calling it an historic opportunity to keep tobacco out of the hands of children, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) applauded the U.S. House for starting work on legislation that would, for the first time, give strong primary authority to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate cigarettes and chewing tobacco.

“Every day, more than 4,000 children try their first cigarette, putting them at risk of becoming addicted and of dying prematurely from diseases that are completely preventable,” said AAP President Renée R. Jenkins, MD, FAAP. “While current state and federal efforts to protect children and adolescents from tobacco are laudable, they clearly are not enough. It’s time for a coordinated approach to regulating this dangerous product and the FDA, with its scientific expertise and regulatory authority, is the only agency suited to this imperative task.”

The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health approved H.R. 1108, The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, on March 11. Dr. Jenkins called on the full committee to quickly take up the legislation, which has broad bipartisan support, and to quash any efforts to weaken the bill.

H.R. 1108 grants FDA broad authority to regulate current and new tobacco products as well as restrict tobacco marketing. Provisions backed by AAP include:

- Requiring new restrictions on tobacco marketing and sales to children and adolescents, such as prohibiting the use of cartoon characters for promotion and barring tobacco companies from sponsoring sports and entertainment events and from handing out free tobacco-themed merchandise that appeals to children;
- Banning candy- and fruit-flavored cigarettes, which are often used as starter products to hook young smokers;
- Creating and enforcing federal penalties for selling tobacco products to minors;
- Placing limits on self-service cigarette displays;
- Requiring public disclosure of all ingredients in cigarettes, as well as stark health warnings covering almost one-third of the packaging;
- Banning the use of such descriptors as “light,” “mild” or “low” and requiring that tobacco products marketed as “safer” pass rigorous FDA scrutiny to ensure the health claims are accurate.

“Studies show that addiction to tobacco almost always begins in childhood,” said Dr. Jenkins. “Making tobacco an FDA-regulated product is just the innovative approach needed to discourage children from taking that first puff. This is a real opportunity to help children live longer and healthier lives both by preventing them from smoking in the first place, and reducing their exposure to second-hand smoke. The AAP is committed to working with Congress to pass the strongest possible tobacco control legislation for children and adolescents.”

###

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. The AAP, Julius B. Richmond Center, a national center of