

Faith United Against Tobacco



February 6, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Following up on our letter of March 17, 2005, we are writing to you as national leaders of America's faith community on behalf of our clergy and lay members to strongly urge you send the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the international tobacco control treaty, to the United States Senate to be immediately considered for ratification.

Today is the first day of the Conference of the Parties (COP) the next step in the FCTC process, where countries which have ratified the treaty are gathering in Geneva to further develop policy on tobacco issues of great importance to our country and the world, such as cigarette smuggling. Unfortunately the U.S. has not ratified the FCTC and will not have a seat at this most important meeting.

As we stated in our previous letter, U.S. ratification of the treaty is critical to ensuring that our nation remains a leader in protecting public health around the world. As home to Philip Morris, the world's largest multinational tobacco company, the U.S. has a special obligation to provide global leadership in reducing the alarming rates of death and disease caused by tobacco use. The U.S. has historically been a leader in protecting public health around the world and can play that role again by ratifying the tobacco treaty and supporting its effective implementation domestically and internationally.

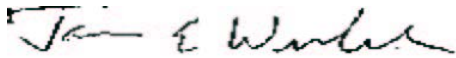
We in the faith community believe we have a moral obligation to do all that we can in order to save countless lives from the horrors of tobacco caused death and illness. In our country, tobacco use claims more than 400,000 lives a year and sickens millions more – these are our mothers, fathers, sisters, brother and children. Globally, some five million people a year die from tobacco-related diseases. If swift action is not taken, this number will rise to 10 million a year by 2030, with 70 percent of the deaths occurring in developing countries.

The tobacco treaty enshrines policies that our own Surgeon General's reports have recommended for years as the most effective tools to reduce tobacco use. Among other things, the treaty commits nations to clamp down on tobacco marketing; place large, graphic health warnings on cigarette packs; raise tobacco taxes; and enact protections against the health risks of secondhand smoke. Through this treaty, we are exporting to

the world the solutions our own science and experience have identified. This is only appropriate because for too long U.S. tobacco companies have been the leading exporters of the deadly products that are the main cause of the epidemic. U.S. ratification and support for the treaty signal the rest of the world that our country puts the interests of public health ahead of the interests of U.S. tobacco companies.

Ratification and effective implementation of the FCTC will help to alleviate the worldwide tobacco epidemic. We urge our government to join the over 100 countries that have ratified the tobacco treaty. By ratifying this treaty, the United States can continue to be a leader in improving health and saving lives around the world.

Sincerely,



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General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church



Dr. DeWitt Williams, Director
Health Ministries, North American Division
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