

February 9, 2005

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

If current trends continue, the lives of two hundred and fifty million children around the world will be cut short prematurely by tobacco use. Fortunately, with concerted action at the national and international levels, governments can prevent millions of premature deaths and protect future generations of children from falling victim to the tobacco epidemic.

We are writing to urge you to send the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to the U.S. Senate, to be immediately considered for ratification. As of February 1, 2005, fifty-five countries from all regions of the world have ratified this treaty. It will become international law on February 27th.

In May of 2003, the World Health Assembly adopted the FCTC unanimously. To the extent permitted by national constitutions, the treaty commits nations to restrict tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. It commits signatories to require large warning labels covering at least 30 percent of cigarette packs. The treaty also provides nations with a roadmap for enacting strong, science-based policies in other areas such as secondhand smoke protections, tobacco taxation, tobacco product regulation, combating cigarette smuggling, public education, and tobacco cessation treatment.

The tobacco treaty is important to the United States, but it has particular importance to developing nations. There are currently an estimated 1.3 billion smokers worldwide. Half of them, some 650 million people, are expected to die prematurely of a tobacco-related disease; by 2030, 70 percent of those deaths will be in the developing world. With proper implementation, this tobacco treaty will represent an historic turning point in the fight against tobacco use and save millions of lives around the world.

The United States supported the adoption of the treaty in May 2003 and Former HHS Secretary Thompson signed the FCTC treaty on behalf of the Bush Administration in June of 2004, indicating support for the FCTC's great potential to improve health and save lives around the world. United States participation in this treaty signals our continued commitment to our responsibility as a leader in global public health. This urgent matter of national and international public health should be an issue around which a broad, bipartisan consensus is formed. We urge you to begin the process of building that consensus by submitting the treaty to the U.S. Senate for ratification as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Marty Meehan  
Todd Russell Platts  
Co-Chairs, Task Force on Tobacco and Health

Henry Waxman  
Louise Slaughter  
Nancy Pelosi  
Jerrold Nadler  
Lois Capps  
Maurice Hinchey  
Tom Lantos  
John Olver  
Diane DeGette  
Donna Christian-Christensen  
Donald Payne  
Lloyd Doggett  
Robert Wexler  
Rosa DeLauro