

**Public
Citizen**
NEWS RELEASE

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**U.S. Cigarette Companies Fail to Warn Foreign
Smokers of Tobacco Dangers**

***Grossly Inadequate Warning Labels on American
Cigarette Packs Sold in Developing Countries***

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- American cigarette manufacturers are failing to carry adequate warning labels on packs sold in Africa, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe, revealed a report released by Public Citizen's Health Research Group today.

"A smoker in Argentina will not see any warning on a box of American cigarettes that smoking causes emphysema or heart disease. A smoker in Kenya will be told even less. American cigarette packs in Kenya do not even warn of the harm to pregnant women, that smoking causes lung cancer, or that quitting might be beneficial. All of these are included in current U.S. warning labels," said Dr. Peter Lurie, an author of the study, *Smokescreen: Double Standards Between the U.S. and Foreign Countries in Cigarette Labeling*, and a Medical Researcher with Public Citizen.

Although smoking is just as damaging to Argentines and Kenyans as it is to Americans, American tobacco manufacturers supply fewer warnings to citizens of those and other foreign countries than they offer to the American public, the study found.

The study assigned a score reflecting the content of cigarette pack labels ranging from 0 (worst) to 10 (best). The current U.S. warning received a 6, while the labels in 26 developing countries received an average of 1.6.

"American cigarette companies are practicing a lethal double standard. Non-Americans are being denied vital information available to U.S. residents," Lurie said.

The study used an Internet listserv of tobacco activists to examine warning label requirements in 45 of the 56 countries on the listserv. While American cigarettes sold in the U.S. have to carry certain warnings by law, other countries often require only rudimentary health warnings. A Marlboro pack received from Japan, for example, displays only the following warning required by the Japanese government: "Be careful not to smoke too much, because it is harmful for your health." Some countries don't require any warning labels.

American companies selling overseas, like Philip Morris and RJR Nabisco, the makers of Marlboro and Camel respectively, generally provide no greater warnings than the often grossly inadequate warnings required by local law, the study found. Warning labels in developing countries are much weaker with respect to their size, content and location than warnings in developed countries.

"Cigarettes do not suddenly become less harmful when sold abroad. There can be no justification for withholding information from foreign consumers about the hazards of smoking," said Dr. Sidney Wolfe, Director of Public Citizen's Health Research Group. "This failure to label cigarette packs contributes to rising death rates from smoking in developing countries."

The U.S. sells more cigarettes abroad than domestically, and while U.S. cigarette consumption declined 4.5 percent between 1990 and 1995, it rose 8 percent in the Asia/Pacific region.

Smokescreen: Double Standards Between the U.S. and Foreign Countries in Cigarette Labeling recommends that U.S. companies operating abroad be required to adhere to the same labeling and marketing restrictions as in the U.S. Proposals that would require such consistency have been supported by Reps. Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas) and Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and are supported by a variety of groups including the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association and the American Public Health Association. Reps. Doggett and Waxman were scheduled to appear at the news conference.

The study was a research project undertaken by University of Michigan undergraduate students Macksood Aftab and Deborah Kolben under Lurie's supervision.

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For more information on this issue, visit Public Citizen's website at www.citizen.org

STATEMENT BY REPRESENTATIVE HENRY A. WAXMAN

September 9, 1998

I regret that I cannot be with you today, but I want to congratulate Dr. Peter Lurie and his colleagues at Public Citizen's Health Research Group for producing an outstanding report that calls attention to a serious but little known problem -- the virtual absence of meaningful health warning labels on American cigarettes sold abroad.

The toll that tobacco wreaks worldwide is staggering and the numbers are almost too large to comprehend. Today tobacco products account for over three million deaths worldwide each year; by 2020, that number is expected to rise to 10 million per year. In China alone, 2,000 people a day are killed by tobacco.

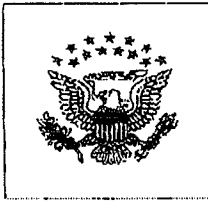
The U.S. tobacco companies are active participants in causing this global epidemic. In fact, most cigarettes produced by American tobacco companies and their subsidiaries are not smoked in the United States at all. The U.S. is the largest exporter of cigarettes in the world.

This study shows that American tobacco companies are failing to include even the inadequate U.S. health warnings on cigarettes they sell to much of the world. The tobacco companies tell smokers overseas even less about the health effects of smoking than they tell smokers in the U.S. People -- regardless of whether they live in La Paz, Lima, or L.A. -- have the right to know the health risk they incur by smoking. The American tobacco industry should not be allowed to pursue an international sales strategy based on continuing deceit and deception, and they should not be allowed to sell cigarettes abroad without full and meaningful health warning labels.

Every country has the responsibility to set its own policies on the sale and marketing of products inside its borders. But as the world's leading exporter of tobacco products, the United States has the obligation to guarantee that its companies will behave responsibly no matter where they do business.

This report underscores the need for the U.S. to establish a code of conduct for labeling and advertising overseas. U.S. tobacco companies should be required to print health warning labels on tobacco products sold overseas that are as stringent as those required in the United States. U.S. tobacco companies should also be prohibited from selling, advertising, or marketing tobacco products to children in other countries, with the same standards applied to their overseas conduct as at home.

We criticize other countries for exporting addictive drugs like cocaine and heroin to the U.S. We have an obligation to protect other countries from U.S. companies that profit from the export of an even more addictive drug - nicotine.



UNITED STATES SENATOR * ILLINOIS

DICK DURBIN

P R E S S R E L E A S E

For Immediate Release

Contact: Melissa Merz

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September 9, 1998

**STATEMENT OF U.S. SEN. DICK DURBIN ON PUBLIC CITIZEN
REPORT ON CIGARETTE WARNING LABELS**

A few countries put us to shame with their clear and prominent warning labels on packages of cigarettes, but in most countries the laws are weak and ineffective. I applaud Public Citizen for its report documenting the lack of warning that many citizens around the world receive regarding the damages caused by tobacco use.

I have been working for legislation that would require American tobacco companies to use warning labels in other countries that are at least as strong as those in our country. But U.S. tobacco manufacturers should tell the truth about their products whether they are required to do so or not. Their products cause cancer, heart disease, and emphysema, and are addictive; secondhand smoke is also deadly; and pregnant women face special risks from tobacco use.

These are facts the companies should admit to all people, whether they live in the United States or any other country.

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