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**TOBACCO INDUSTRY'S SOFT-MONEY CONTRIBUTIONS UP 326 PERCENT;
STUDY FINDS INFLUENCE PERVASIVE IN PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Soft-money contributions to the two major parties by the tobacco industry rose dramatically between 1988 and 1992, up 326 percent to more than \$3.1 million as of June 30, according to a report released today by Public Citizen and the Advocacy Institute.

The report showed that the Democrats, who received only \$38,000 in 1988 from tobacco interests, took in \$731,000 through June 30, a 19-fold increase. The Republican Party, which pulled in \$448,000 in 1988, received \$1.34 million from the tobacco industry through the first half of 1992, according to data from the National Library on Money and Politics.

In addition to financial contributions from corporations, trade groups and individual tobacco executives, the report also found that many officials in both parties -- including top staff in the campaigns of President Bush and Governor Clinton -- are or have been tobacco industry executives, publicists or lobbyists. Among them are Craig Fuller, a Bush confidante and chairman of last week's Republican National Convention, who serves as vice president at Philip Morris; and Michael Kantor, Clinton campaign manager, who has represented Los Angeles clients opposing smoke-free restaurant ordinances and whose law firm represents Philip Morris in Washington.

In all, the report cites 45 people -- 13 Bush campaign officials, 3 Clinton staff, 19 Reagan-Bush administration officials, and 10 in previous administrations -- with strong ties to the tobacco industry.

"It is no wonder that the U.S. government has performed so abysmally in failing to control the use of tobacco, which kills nearly 500,000 Americans every year and drains \$52 billion a year in health spending," said Dr. Sidney Wolfe, director of Public Citizen's Health Research Group.

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"Now we know why other countries have banned tobacco advertising entirely and placed appropriately onerous taxes on tobacco products, while U.S. president after president refuses to show any leadership to put an end to the tobacco epidemic," Wolfe said.

According to the report, RJR Nabisco is the tobacco industry's biggest political donor in 1992 so far, giving \$299,000 to the Democrats and \$426,100 to the Republicans, for a total of \$725,100 through June 30. Next was U.S. Tobacco, with a total of \$503,520, and then Philip Morris with \$437,330.

"The tobacco industry is clearly getting its money's worth," said Cliff Douglas, Tobacco Policy Director for the Advocacy Institute. "The industry's choke hold on the White House continues to distort the setting of U.S. health policy.

"The main victims are the children, the poor and the less-educated members of our society, who are relentlessly enticed into deadly nicotine addiction by the tobacco industry's nearly \$4 billion-a-year marketing effort," Douglas said.

International comparisons of policies on tobacco show the United States lagging far behind. While U.S. cigarette taxes are 46 cents per pack, Denmark levies \$4.07 a pack and Canada \$3.26 per pack, more than seven times the U.S. tax. Among the developed countries, eight -- Denmark, Norway, Canada, Finland, Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden, and Germany tax cigarettes at more than \$2.00 per pack, while only the United States, Spain and Greece levy taxes of less than \$1.00 per pack.

On tobacco advertising bans, of the 19 countries whose policies were examined, only Japan lags behind the United States. Canada, France, Australia and Norway have banned all print and electronic ads, billboards and sponsorship of events by manufacturers of tobacco.

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