

Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust Board of Directors: “Oklahoma needs effective public policy to protect all Oklahomans from the dangers of tobacco.”

September 19, 2018

WHEREAS, smoking kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders and suicides combined and is the leading cause of preventable death and illness in the United States;

WHEREAS, 7,500 Oklahoma adults die each year from smoking, 88,000 Oklahoma children now under 18 will die prematurely from smoking, and for every one person who dies because of smoking at least 30 people live with a serious smoking-related illness;

WHEREAS, smoking during pregnancy increases the likelihood of children being born prematurely or at a low birth rate; premature babies may suffer lifelong consequences, including cerebral palsy, developmental delays, chronic lung disease and vision or hearing loss

WHEREAS, more than half of all Oklahoma adults report being exposed to cancer-causing secondhand smoke – a rate higher than the national average – and while more than half of the U.S. has comprehensive protections from secondhand smoke, Oklahoma does not;

WHEREAS, 95 percent of smokers began using tobacco before turning 21, and 4 of 5 kids who started using tobacco began with a flavored product and with vulnerability to addiction peaking in adolescence;

WHEREAS, in 2006, a U.S. federal court found Altria, Philip Morris USA, R.J. Reynolds, and other tobacco companies in violation of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), citing 145 distinct acts of racketeering in a 1,682 page ruling (*United States v. Philip Morris*) and finding the companies’ fraudulent conduct has permeated all aspects of their operations, that they would likely continue committing fraud indefinitely into the future, and that their conspiracy sought not only to misinform the public, but also lawmakers;

WHEREAS, tobacco companies began publishing court-ordered “corrective statements” in November 2017 regarding the adverse health effects of smoking; the addictiveness of smoking and nicotine; the lack of any significant health benefit from smoking ‘low tar,’ ‘light,’ ‘ultralight,’ ‘mild,’ and ‘natural,’ cigarettes; manipulation of cigarette design to ensure optimum nicotine delivery and increase addictiveness; and health risks of exposure to secondhand smoke;

WHEREAS, Oklahoma’s laws do not include full protections from tobacco use and secondhand smoke for adults and children, and current Oklahoma law includes tobacco industry provisions that continue to make it easier for youth and young people to begin

using tobacco, keep tobacco users addicted, expose workers to toxic secondhand smoke, prevent cities from protecting citizens from secondhand smoke exposure in their communities, and create an uneven playing field for some businesses;

WHEREAS, the TSET Board of Directors acknowledges that major U.S. tobacco companies were found to have an ongoing pattern of criminal activity, causing great harm to many Oklahomans; and hereby seeks the remediation of tobacco industry influences in Oklahoma laws; and

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the TSET Board of Directors respectively encourages the public and lawmakers to embrace high-impact state and local policies to keep young people from starting to use tobacco products, encourage those who use tobacco products to quit, protect all Oklahomans from toxic secondhand smoke and modernize state laws to support 100% tobacco free environments.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the TSET Board of Directors supports efforts to:

- enact comprehensive clean indoor air laws
- prohibit smoking in cars with minors
- ban menthol and other flavored tobacco products
- enact meaningful price increases on tobacco products within the next decade
- prevent and reduce access to all tobacco products, including vapor products by increasing the age to purchase tobacco to 21
- strengthen laws that prevent young people from having access to cigarettes and other tobacco products and support adequate enforcement of those provisions
- modernize employment laws to allow employers to support tobacco-free environments.

FURTHERMORE, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the TSET Board of Directors respectively recommends the adoption of the aforementioned policies and when enacted, in combination with enhanced investments in tobacco use prevention and cessation efforts, are expected to cut Oklahoma's adult smoking in half by 2028, and prevent young people from starting to use tobacco.

THE TSET BOARD OF DIRECTORS hereby calls upon other interested groups and governing bodies to adopt similar resolutions.