

Washington, D.C. – Congressman John Barrow (GA-12) applauded tough new rules that took effect on Tuesday, cracking down on tobacco marketing and sales to children, requiring much larger health warning labels on smokeless tobacco products, and banning the use of deceptive “light” or “low-tar” labels on cigarettes.

The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act was signed into law on June 22, 2009, and many key provisions of the law went into effect yesterday – one year after the date of enactment. Tobacco is now responsible for about 1 in 5 deaths annually, or more than 400,000 deaths a year, and tens of billions of dollars of extra health care costs.

“Tobacco-related illnesses are currently the number-one cause of preventable death in America,” said Barrow. “We now have new tools to help prevent tobacco use by children and reduce tobacco-related illnesses across America. The new rules targeting tobacco marketing to kids are particularly important, because tobacco companies continue to spend more than \$12 billion a year to market their products, often in shameful ways designed to appeal especially to children.”

Every day, more than 3,500 young people try a cigarette for the first time, and another 1,000 will become new, daily smokers. One-third of these youths will eventually die prematurely as a result.

Cracking Down on Tobacco Marketing and Sales to Kids

Key provisions targeting tobacco marketing and sales to kids that took effect yesterday:

- Ban all remaining tobacco-brand sponsorships of sports and entertainment events.
- Ban virtually all free tobacco samples and giveaways of non-tobacco items, such as hats and t-shirts, with the purchase of tobacco.
- Prohibit the sale of cigarettes in packs of less than 20 (eliminating so-called “kiddie packs” that make cigarettes more affordable and appealing to kids).
- Require stores to place cigarettes and other tobacco products behind the counter, out of reach of children.
- Restrict vending machines and self-service displays to adult-only facilities.

- Place a national ban on the sale of tobacco products to people under age 18 (rather than the current state-by-state bans).

New Labeling Rules for Smokeless Tobacco and Banning Use of Deceptive “Light,” “Mild,” and “Low-Tar” Labels

Key provision on labeling:

- Require larger, bolder health warnings on smokeless tobacco products and advertising. Specifically, these warnings must cover 30 percent of package display panels and 20 percent of advertising. (Large, graphic warnings on cigarette packs and advertising are being developed and will take effect by 2012 or sooner.) The new warnings on smokeless tobacco products are important because these products are very addictive and cause cancer and other serious diseases. As smoking rates have declined and restrictions on where you can smoke have multiplied, tobacco companies have introduced new smokeless tobacco products and significantly increased marketing for them. The most recent government surveys have found that, while cigarette smoking has declined, smokeless tobacco has increased by more than 33 percent among 10th to 12th graders in recent years.

- Ban terms such as “light,” “mild,” or “low-tar,” when marketing and selling cigarettes. For decades, the tobacco industry has used these terms to deceive the public into believing that some brands of cigarettes are less harmful than others and to discourage smokers from quitting. Many smokers erroneously believe that using these products help reduce the risks from smoking. This is false, and the tobacco industry has long known that it is false.

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