

DIXIE COUNTY TOBACCO PREVENTION NEWSLETTER

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The Town of Cross City Makes History

By Thomas J. Harrington, Policy Manager, Quit Doc Research and Education Foundation

On April 11, 2011, the Cross City Council passed a resolution "intended to discourage the placement, sale, and delivery of candy flavored tobacco products to persons under the age of 18." Other local communities have passed similar resolutions around the state of Florida but for this to happen in Dixie County is a watershed moment that has remarkable significance.

For years, Dixie County had notoriously led the state in tobacco use amongst youth. It's a well-known fact that about 90% of new tobacco users are between the ages of 12 and 18. The tobacco companies know this and market new products with fruity candy flavors to catch their attention and get them hooked. Anyone who's ever even opened a can of flavored Snus or dip, or smelled a little grape cigar, knows how enticing the aroma is, not to mention the actual clever packaging of the products themselves. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has thus recently enabled states and local governments to take action by providing the capability to draft legislation to restrict the placement, sale, and delivery of these types of deceiving products.

Prior to the Town of Cross City taking action on this matter, the SWAT youth and Quit Doc's Tobacco Prevention Specialist shared a powerful presentation to city officials on the different candy-flavored products easily accessible to youth. These tobacco products come in all sorts of flavors ranging from apple to cherry to even wine-flavored. Their placement at different retail outlets in the community ranges from being in front of and beside of the cash register as well as other self-serving areas that are easy to reach.

Even some adults do not recognize that these are tobacco

because of their fruity or candy-like characteristics. Other adults, who do recognize that they're tobacco products, think they may be a safer alternative to cigarettes for their children and teenagers. That is definitely not the case as candy-flavored tobacco is just as addictive, if not more addictive, for young people. It's become the norm that many places can typically put candy-flavored tobacco out in reach just like gum or candy. The harm that these products cause for a lifetime however necessitates a change in the social norms.

The city officials of Cross City recognized this as an issue with key implications for youth. City Councilwoman Kay Harden, a grandparent and former smoker, said that she backs the goals of SWAT youth and keeping these products out of reach and sight for the sake of youth. The council publicly resolved that no vendors should place candy-flavored tobacco in any self-service merchandising area. This means any open area that allows direct public access of the product whether it's on a case, rack, shelf, booth,

table, desk, stand, kiosk, or any other surface that falls under such access. It's very important that young people do not have the ability to reach or touch these products (which they do for gum, candy, toys, and other items) because then it would be associated as normal or acceptable.

If vendors comply with the resolution it will not only change the social norms but will enhance the "public health, safety, and welfare" of Cross City. Fewer youth will become addicted to tobacco meaning less of a public cost to society and less of a burden on people's own health down the road.

In fact, since tobacco can be a gateway to illicit drug use, the society's well-being and safety will be positively affected as well. As one can see, there is definitely a multitude of good reasons to enact such a resolution in our community. We're very thankful that the Town of Cross City has taken this pivotal step in the right direction and hope it serves as a distinguished model for many other communities to do the same.



From Left to Right: Chelsy Cannon, Ariel Cassidy, Dixie County High School SWAT Advisor Jodi Spurlin, Cross City Mayor Dot Smith, Dixie County Tobacco Prevention Specialist Melanie Anderson, and Ariel Neiss.

Dixie County Awarded for Tobacco-Free Efforts

By Thomas J. Harrington, Policy Manager, Quit Doc Research and Education Foundation

The Dixie County Tobacco Free Partnership recently held a special meeting to recognize and honor those who have faithfully and steadfastly helped in tobacco-free endeavors.

Two members of the Cross City Council were awarded for their support. Councilwoman Kay Harden has been a loyal and unwavering partner supporting efforts to reduce tobacco influence on youth over the last two years. Mayor Dot Smith became involved this past year and was very supportive of the city's recent resolution regarding candy-flavored tobacco products.

In addition, the partnership has enjoyed having a great advocate with City Clerk Angie Bush, who was awarded for her ongoing support for tobacco-free youth in Cross City over the last few years. Her work and interest in the community not only includes the partnership but also includes leadership with the Cross City Lions' Club. The Lions' Club focuses on helping the visually impaired and as studies have shown, tobacco use can complicate certain eye diseases.

Debbie DeWeese, Dixie County Chamber president, was recognized for her participation at the county level and supporting the youth at the last County Commission hearing where Commissioners had been informed about candy-flavored tobacco access in Dixie.

Some people may know Manette Chesharek, a health expert who works with people trying to quit the habit of smoking. Her cessation classes in Dixie County are a great haven for peo-

ple wanting to quit and if anyone is interested in signing up for free classes one should contact Suwannee River AHEC (Area Health Education Center) at 866-341-2730.

Jodi Spurlin, SWAT Advisor at Dixie County High School, received a plaque for always going above and beyond in advising the high school youth, and tirelessly taking part in countless tobacco-free activities during this past school year.

The partnership's two leaders, Charlotte Lord of Dixie County School District, and Carol West, of Dixie Education Foundation, also received plaques. They are always very dependable when it comes to executive decision-making, lending support to projects, and facilitating our partnership meetings. Charlotte's experienced leadership style has served the partnership well

as she chairs the meetings and makes everything run smoothly. Carol West has helped the partnership accomplish a lot of its objectives by her positive attitude and her outstanding presence in the community.

A list of the plaques awarded and those who were present to receive included:

- Councilwoman Kay Harden, Champion & Long-Time Partner for Healthy Youth
- Mayor Dot Smith, Champion Mayor for Tobacco-Free Youth
- Angie Bush, Advocate for a Healthier Community
- Debbie DeWeese, Tobacco-Free Youth Advocate
- Charlotte Lord, Tobacco-Free Leadership Award
- Carol West, Outstanding Tobacco-Free Advocate Award
- Jodi Spurlin, Above & Beyond Tobacco-Free Award
- Manette Chesharek,

Healthy Community Advocate

Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) officers were also given certificates and awards for their perseverance and hard work throughout the school year.

Without the active involvement and concern of all of these individuals and students, the partnership would not be what it is and where it is today. There has been an incredible amount of progress when it comes to awareness and reduction of harm in the community.

To end the school year on an impressive and remarkable historical note, Cross City Council passed a resolution on candy-flavored tobacco. The partnership looks forward to doing more great things in the community. If interested in joining please contact T.J. Harrington at tharrington@quitdoc.com.



Award Recipients and Presenters from L to R: Suwannee River AHEC Tobacco Treatment Specialist Manette Chesharek, Tobacco Free Partnership Chair Charlotte Lord, Cross City Councilwoman Kay Harden, Cross City Clerk Angie Bush, Cross City Mayor Dot Smith, Dixie County Chamber of Commerce President Debbie DeWeese, Tobacco Free Partnership Co-Chair Carol West, Dixie County Tobacco Prevention Specialist Melanie Anderson, Dixie High SWAT Advisor Jodi Spurlin, and Quit Doc Policy Manager T.J. Harrington.

Results of Surveillance of Tobacco Advertising and Product Placement in Dixie County Released

By Melanie Anderson, Dixie County Tobacco Prevention Specialist

Over the last several months, surveillance was conducted to evaluate point-of-purchase tobacco advertising and product placement in Dixie County, Florida. The core concern is the level of tobacco advertising and the amount of self-service tobacco to which youth are exposed in the local community.

To conduct the survey, QDREF utilized the StoreALERT report card; this method was developed as part of a national study, and is currently monitored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The StoreALERT survey looks at both exterior and interior advertising, as well as tobacco placement inside local retailers. The StoreALERT program also provides training materials to allow participation by volunteers, including members of Students Working Against Tobacco in Dixie County.

The Tobacco Free Partnership of Dixie County compiled a list of potential businesses that might carry tobacco products. Fifteen individual businesses in Cross City and Old Town area were identified using this method. SWAT Youth and volunteers then visited each of these stores to determine if they sold tobacco products, and, if so, to evaluate the level of tobacco advertising and product placement.

Overall, 73.4% of tobacco retailers received a grade of "D" or "F", meaning these retail stores had a significant amount of tobacco advertising. This is a slight decrease from 78.9% identified during the 2010 surveillance.

Convenience stores, gas stations, and combined stores were the worst offenders. Because of the small number of stores, we studied the statistics of these three types of stores as a group. **90.9% of**

these types of stores received a grade of "D" or "F"!

This highlights the issue of tobacco advertising. It is primarily an issue in convenience stores. These are the very stores in which teenagers tend to shop.

Next we looked at two key indicators. The first is tobacco advertising located outside of the retail outlet. This is important because it affects the entire community, not just the individuals shopping in the stores.

60% of all tobacco retailers had some level of outdoor tobacco advertising, and 20% of those retailers had a moderate level of tobacco advertising. Both areas showed an increase from 2010 surveillance.

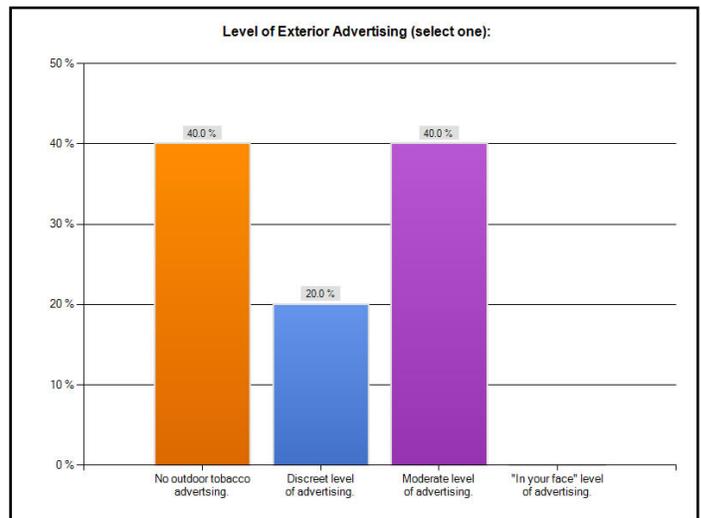
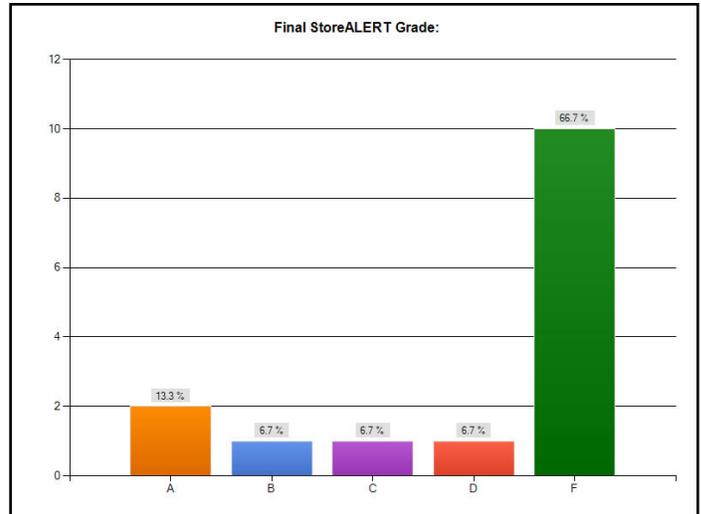
Looking deeper at outdoor tobacco advertising among convenience stores and gas stations, only 18.1% of convenience stores chose not to place outdoor tobacco advertising on their property, whereas 100% of all non-convenience stores/gas stations do not have outdoor tobacco advertising on their property.

The location of tobacco advertising and tobacco placement can be a good indicator to whom the product is being advertised and sold.

Only 13.3% of all stores place tobacco products at child eye-level; however, 46.7% of stores advertised tobacco products at child eye-level.

Another technique used to advertise tobacco to students is to place the product near the register. 13% of all of the stores surveyed placed tobacco products within 12 inches of a cash register.

Finally, we focused on self-service tobacco as a key indicator of youth tobacco access.



Self-service tobacco makes it easier for youth to make tobacco purchases, or to simply steal tobacco in order to start and maintain tobacco addiction. **Only 13.3% of tobacco retailers in Dixie County currently offer self-service tobacco.**

The 2011 surveillance demonstrates that tobacco retailers in Dixie County continue to use tobacco advertising and product placement to entice children into using tobacco products. If these stores with F scores were to

simply put the products behind the counters, and to only advertise indoors only in locations where tobacco products are placed, then they would receive a much higher rating on the StoreAlert Survey. By continually advertising at child eye-level, placing products where children shop, and advertising on doors and windows they indicate that Dixie County students will continue to be targets of tobacco.

For more information contact Melanie Anderson at manderson@quitdo.c.com.

Florida Suit Challenges Financial Breaks For Cigarette Makers During Legal Appeals

By Barry Hummel, Jr., MD, Quit Doc Research and Education Foundation

"In sum, this is an extremely important constitutional issue ... that is already arising in many appeals of multimillion-dollar judgments and will potentially arise in literally thousands of cases."

John S. Mills
Florida Appellate Attorney

TALLAHASSEE — Florida lawmakers last month quietly extended a financial break for tobacco companies facing a wave of lawsuits because of smoking-related illnesses.

However, the move was made despite a legal challenge that argues the break is unconstitutional because it gives special treatment to one particular industry, in this case cigarette makers.

The issue involves a state law that specifically allows the major tobacco companies to post smaller-than-usual bonds when they appeal judgments against them. The law directly saves money for cigarette makers, which have recently been hit with a series of multimillion-dollar verdicts in an initial wave of cases by smokers with serious tobacco-related illnesses.

A key part of this law was scheduled to expire Dec. 31, 2012. On the final day of the 2011 legislative session, lawmakers approved a Medicaid-budget bill that eliminated the expiration date. The bill was then signed by Gov. Rick Scott. By doing this, the Florida Legislature and the Governor have provided indefinite financial breaks to the tobacco industry unless additional action is taken.

The legislature suggested that the extension was needed because the state relies on money from a 1997 settlement agreement with major tobacco companies which helps fund tobacco prevention and cessation programs throughout Florida. House Health Care Appropriations Chairman Matt Hudson (R,

Naples) said the main concern is that lawsuits could drive these tobacco companies into bankruptcy if the bond relief goes away. He said that would leave the state in a "no man's land" in continuing to get money from the multibillion-dollar settlement.

"From my standpoint, there are thousands of these cases, and we're nowhere near being done," Hudson said on May 29, 2011.

But John S. Mills, an appellate attorney who is representing families in cases against tobacco companies, contends the smaller-than-usual bonds are unconstitutional.

Mills argues, in part, that the Florida Constitution bars special laws that benefit certain private companies. A three-judge panel of the 1st District Court of Appeal ruled against Mills in April, but he has asked for a rehearing or a hearing before the full appeals court.

"In sum, this is an extremely important constitutional issue ... that is already arising in many appeals of multimillion-dollar judgments and will potentially arise in literally thousands of cases," Mills wrote in a brief.

The onslaught of cases -- and much of the debate about the bond amounts -- stems from a 2006 Florida Supreme Court ruling in a class-action lawsuit against the tobacco industry.

That ruling ended a class action lawsuit by smokers suffering from tobacco-related illnesses, instead requiring that cases by smokers against the tobacco

industry to be heard individually. The ruling also established critical findings about the health dangers of smoking and past misrepresentations by cigarette makers, making it easier for individual cases to proceed by removing the burden of proof surrounding key elements of the cases.

While the individual cases are taking time, tobacco companies are already getting hit with large verdicts. As an example, the 1st District Court of Appeal last month upheld a \$15.75 million judgment against R.J. Reynolds in case from Alachua County, Florida.

Similarly, Mills raised the constitutional issues about bond amounts in an Escambia County case with total damages topping \$20 million.

Bonds are important because they help ensure that judgments ultimately get paid when lawsuits are appealed. That is relevant in the smoking cases, because tobacco companies commonly appeal large judgments.

The state law applies to five companies that were part of the 1997 settlement agreement and caps the total amount of bonds that could be posted at \$200 million. Also, it places a \$5 million maximum bond amount on any individual judgment.

Ordinarily, Mills said parties appealing judgments have to post bonds that cover the full amounts plus interest.

Governor Scott Signs New Law Allowing Local School Districts to Regulate Smoking on School Campuses

By Barry Hummel, Jr., Quit Doc Research and Education Foundation

On June 2, 2011, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed into law a bill that gives local school districts the ability to regulate all smoking on public school campuses. This law is the first revision of the Florida Clean Indoor Air Act (FCIAA) since its passage in 2003, and the first change in the Preemption Clause contained in the FCIAA since the original 1985 legislation.

The issue of smoking on public school campuses rose in prominence in December, 2010. At that time, the Florida Attorney General's office issued an opinion that the rules regarding smoking on public school campuses were regulated by the preemption clause, which "expressly preempts regulation of smoking to the state and supersedes any municipal or county ordinance on the subject." While local school districts argued that these rules did not involve "ordinances", many were forced to stop working on rules to prohibit adult smoking on school campuses.

The Attorney General's opinion added a new dimension to the issue of local control over smoking rules. As a



result, both the Florida House and Senate filed bills filed during the 2011 Florida Legislative Session which would return control of outdoor smoking regulations to local governments, paving the way for local municipalities to create smoke-free parks, beaches, and school campuses throughout the state.

Early in the 2011 Florida legislative session, Representative Kathleen Passidomo (R, Florida House District 76) filed HB 211, which would have inserted the word

"indoor" into the preemption clause, returning control of all *outdoor smoking* to local governments. In support, Florida Senator D. Alan Hays (R, Florida Senate District 20) filed the identical bill, SB 1070, in the Florida Senate.

Resistance to altering the Preemption Clause stalled these two bills in committee hearings. However, there was obvious support for changing the rules regarding the regulation of smoking on public school campuses.

As a result, Representative Bill Hager (R, Florida House District 87) filed HB 891, *Regulation of Smoking*, specifically designed to exempt school districts from the Preemption Clause contained in the FCIAA. Senator Thad Altman (R, Florida Senate District 24) joined the cause by filing the companion bill, SB 1430.

These two bills easily cruised through their respective committee hearings, passing unanimously in each committee.

On May 3, 2011, the full Senate passed SB 1430 by a vote of 38-1. The only dis-

senting vote was cast by Senator Evelyn Lynn (R, Senate District 7). One day later, on May 4, 2011, the Florida House unanimously passed HB 891 by a vote of 117-0.

The final language of the bill alters the preemption clause to state that Florida Statute "expressly preempts regulation of smoking to the state and supersedes any municipal or county ordinance on the subject; **however school districts may further restrict smoking by persons on school district property.**"

The new law will now allow school districts to strengthen their existing rules on tobacco use on all school property, including driveways and athletic fields.

For additional information on strengthening the rules on tobacco use and possession on school property, please contact the Tobacco Free Partnership of Gilchrist County at 352-463-7006, or contact Melanie Anderson, the Tobacco Prevention Specialist for Dixie County, at manderson@quitdoc.com.



Rep. Bill Hager (left) and Sen. Thad Altman (right) sponsored the bills that would allow school districts to further restrict smoking on school campus-

CDC Predicts Smoking Bans in Every State by 2020

By Mike Stobbe, Associate Press Medical Writer

ATLANTA – By 2020, every state may have bans on smoking in restaurants, bars and the workplace, federal health officials predicted on April 21, 2011. This estimate was based on the current pace of adopting anti-smoking laws.

The number of states with comprehensive indoor smoking bans went from zero in 2000 to 25 in 2010.

"It is by no means a foregone conclusion that we'll get there by 2020," said Dr. Tim McAfee, director of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Office on Smoking and Health.

But the success of the smoking ban movement has been astounding, and

seems to be accelerating, he added. "I'm relatively bullish we'll at least get close to that number."

Nearly half of U.S. residents are covered by comprehensive state or local indoor smoking bans, the CDC estimated, in a new report.

Another 10 states have laws that ban smoking in workplaces, bars or restaurants, but not in all three venues.

Some other states have less restrictive laws, like requiring smoking areas with separate ventilation.

Only seven states have no indoor smoking restrictions, although some of their cities do: Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas,

West Virginia and Wyoming.

Gary Nolan, director of a smokers' rights group, said he wouldn't be surprised if the CDC's prediction came true. Public health officials and others have been putting tremendous pressure on bars and businesses to bar smoking, he added.

"It wouldn't surprise me if they prevailed," said Nolan, of the Smoker's Club. "It's just a little bit more liberty slipping away at the hands of big government."

Tobacco smoke is an established cause of lung cancer, heart disease and other maladies, and smoking has been called one of the nation's leading causes of death.

The science on the im-

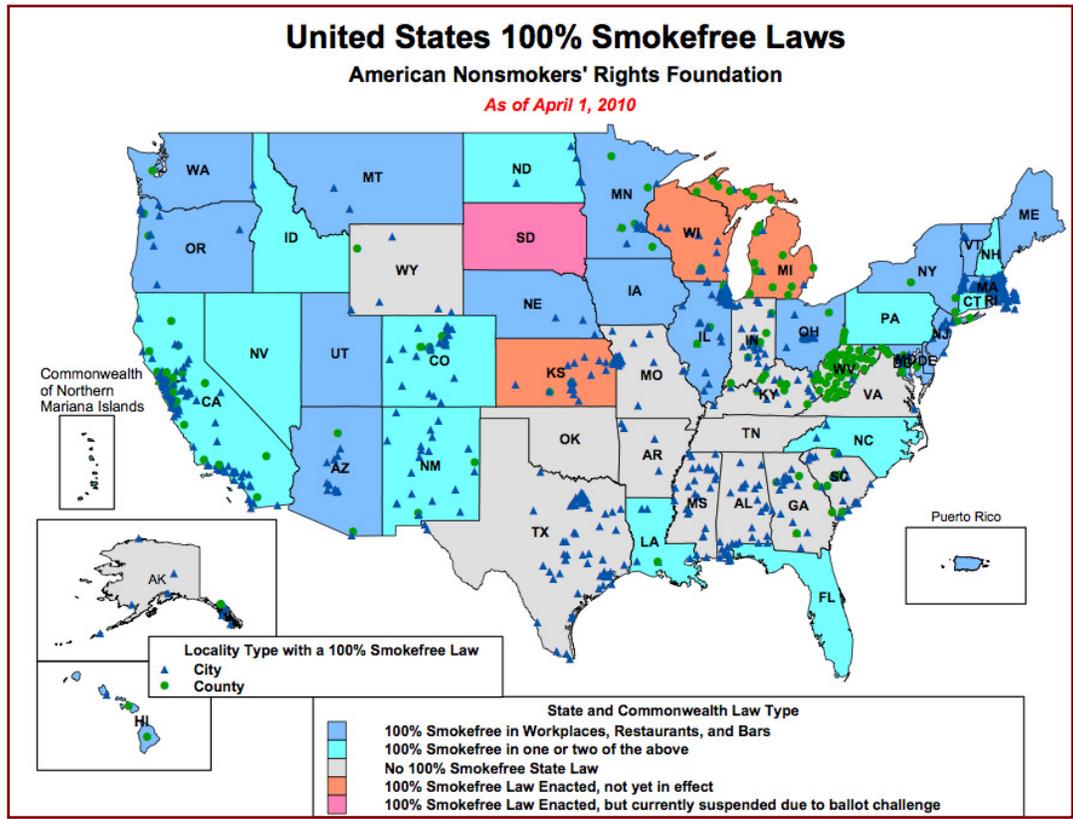
pact of smoking bans is younger. Because it takes years or even decades for cancers to develop, there's little information on the impact of bans on cancer rates. But studies have already charted declines in adult heart attack rates and in childhood asthma attacks after smoking bans were adopted in some communities.

The American Heart Association's chief executive, Nancy Brown, said the CDC report brings good news. But she said advocates have a lot of work ahead of them to make the 2020 prediction come true.

"It's too soon to rest on our laurels," she said, in a prepared statement.

Over half of all States now have some form of indoor workplace smoking restrictions.

Only twelve states still prohibit local jurisdictions from passing additional smoking restrictions.



Selig Says MLB Wants to Ban Smokeless Tobacco

By Jon Krawczynski, AP Baseball Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Much to Commissioner Bud Selig's chagrin, chewing tobacco has been almost as much a part of Major League Baseball (MLB) over the years as "Play Ball!" and the seventh-inning stretch.

It's ingrained in the culture of the game and is evident anytime a player steps on the sticky floor of a big-league dugout.

As owners and the players' union begin negotiations on a new collective bargaining agreement, Selig hopes the time has finally come to rid the game of the unhealthy habit.

In a letter to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids on March 31, 2011, Selig told the group's president he believes "smokeless tobacco should be banned at the Major League level."

In order to make that happen, the owners have to negotiate with the players' union and have the ban added to the next collective bargaining agreement.

"In the current round of bargaining with the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA), MLB will propose restrictions on the use of smokeless tobacco at the Major League level comparable to the restrictions in place at the Minor League level," Selig wrote.

Smokeless tobacco, including dip and chew, is banned in minor league ballparks.

Union chief Michael Weiner said in February that he expected the subject to be broached in the upcoming talks.

"I'm not going to make any predictions about where we're going to go with it, but I do expect it to be an issue," Weiner said then.

Selig's letter was in response to one sent to the commissioner's office this winter from public health officials in 15 MLB cities that urged baseball to ban tobacco use by all personnel in the ballpark.

The officials cited smokeless tobacco's links to oral cancers, gum disease and other health problems and recent statistics released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stating that use of the products among high school boys is up 36 percent since 2003 as reasons to ban it. The group also launched an online campaign—www.tobaccofreebaseball.org—to raise awareness.

"Baseball players are role models for our children, making impressions that last a lifetime," Dr. David Fleming, Director and Health Officer for Public Health in Seattle and King County, Washington, said in a statement. "It's time for major leaguers to step up to the plate like the rest of professional baseball and go tobacco-free."

Baseball banned tobacco use in the minor leagues in 1993, but it is still common in the majors. In February 2011, Sens. Frank R. Lautenberg of New Jersey and Dick Durbin of Illinois sent a letter to Selig and Weiner calling on them to ban smokeless tobacco.

The current collective bargaining agreement expires in December.

MLB, Players to Discuss Tobacco in Collective Bargaining Agreement

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

Congress is urging Major League Baseball to ban smokeless tobacco, and both MLB and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) say they will consider it.

At a hearing in Washington, D.C., on April 13, 2011, House Energy and Commerce Committee chairman Henry Waxman – a California Democrat – and Health Subcommittee chairman Frank Pallone – a New Jersey Democrat – called on MLB and its players to stop using chew, dip or similar products during games.

In response, MLB executive vice president Robert Manfred and MLBPA chief labor counsel David Prouty told lawmakers that while they agree that smokeless tobacco is harmful, any ban would have to be agreed upon through collective bargaining and they're willing to talk about it during future negotiations, The Associated Press reported.

Baseball's labor contract expires in December 2011. Smokeless tobacco is currently banned in the Minor Leagues, but not in the Majors.

"While an outright ban on the use of smokeless tobacco in the Major Leagues is a laudable

goal, it will have to be pursued against the backdrop of these legal realities," Manfred told the committee.

After the hearing, Prouty told the AP, "I can tell you, anecdotally, there are plenty of players who are against [the use of tobacco], who think, 'Of course it should be banned.' There are plenty of players who use it. Do they think it should be banned? I don't know. We can go back to the players and say, 'Congress feels strongly about this. You ought to think about it. Look what's happened on other issues Congress felt strongly about.'"

Manfred cited the efforts MLB has made for years, including the 1993 ban of tobacco use by team personnel, both players and staff, at Minor League ballparks and during team travel.

Also, clubs may not permit the distribution of tobacco products in team clubhouses. However, use of smokeless tobacco remains prevalent in the Majors.

No current Major Leaguers were in attendance during the hearing, but former catcher Joe Garagiola was there and spoke against the use of tobacco, the Associate Press added.



U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (center) and Frank R. Lautenberg (left) are leading the charge against smokeless tobacco in the MLB. (Alex Wong/Getty Images)

Diamondbacks Owner: "Ban Smokeless Tobacco"

By Ken Kendrick, Managing General Partner of the Arizona Diamondbacks

Baseball and tobacco have an enduring, unfortunate relationship.

Babe Ruth famously said he started chewing tobacco when he was five. In 1909 — back when American Tobacco Company was producing baseball cards and packaging them with cigarettes — the great Honus Wagner demanded that his card be pulled from the packs. Many say Wagner objected to using his image to sell tobacco; others say the tobacco company just hadn't paid him enough.

Whatever the reason, Wagner's break with tobacco made that series of cards rare and valuable. I'm proud to own one of them, and I'm pleased that the card represents a player who took action against tobacco.

Now today's players and owners must make a gutsy call and ban smokeless tobacco use at games. For too long, Major League Baseball players have used tobacco on the field, in the dugout, the bullpen and of course, before millions of fans who watch on TV. I know that many players are addicted, and that's part of the problem.

Ballplayers aren't indulging a harmless habit when they use smokeless tobacco. They're damaging their health with a product that causes cancer and other serious diseases. And they're endangering the well-being of countless kids who look



up to them, and who copy everything big leaguers do.

Each spring, I speak to the Diamondbacks players about the privilege of being in baseball. I tell them we're a family-oriented game. Young people come with their parents. They idolize you, I say. How you conduct yourself and how you live your life is very important to our success — and your success.

This is what Major League Baseball and the players union must consider as we enter another round of contract talks in which a possible prohibition on the use of smokeless tobacco is on the table. Commissioner Bud Selig has said that the league will propose a smokeless tobacco prohibition like the one that's been in place in the minor leagues since 1993. I hope owners and players will seize this opportunity and do what's right.

With cigarette sales down and smoke-free laws restricting where smokers can light up, the tobacco industry has

been spending record sums to market smokeless products, promoting them as a substitute for smoking. It's having an effect: Smokeless tobacco use by high school boys is spiking — there has been a 36% increase since 2003. Every time a kid sees a big league player using smokeless tobacco, baseball is contributing free promotion.

Everyone in baseball has seen the debilitating illnesses that smokeless tobacco use can cause. Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn's recent cancer diagnosis and his public statements blaming his cancer on years of chewing tobacco is a vivid example. Washington Nationals pitching ace Stephen Strasburg, who is struggling to quit, has said he started chewing as a young player trying to imitate big leaguers.

The Diamondbacks have worked closely with health officials in Arizona to help educate our own players about tobacco and spread the word to school children. I'm proud of these efforts. But unfortunately, until Major League Baseball prohibits smokeless tobacco use, big league players will still use it — and kids will still copy them.

We need to break this cycle to protect players and provide positive role models for kids. We must finally make the link between baseball and tobacco nothing more than an historic curiosity.

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with your comments and

suggestions, or to

volunteer for one of

our many projects.



Suwannee River AHEC

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