



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

*RWJF Retrospective Series*

# Major Tobacco-Related Events in the United States

*Author*

George Grob

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A companion report to  
*The Tobacco Campaigns of the  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
and Collaborators, 1991–2010*

## Companion Reports in this RWJF Tobacco Retrospective Series

The Tobacco Campaigns of the  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
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Route 1 and College Road East  
P.O. Box 2316  
Princeton, NJ 08543-2316

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## *Preface*

Twenty years ago the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation decided to put our name and substantial financial and human resources behind a bold initiative to reduce tobacco use in this country. For two decades, RWJF has been working with partners in government, education, philanthropy and the private sector to make literally the air that we breathe safe to inhale and to free many Americans from a gripping, destructive addiction to which they were seduced in their youth. As this retrospective indicates, our tobacco-control campaigns often have seemed an uphill battle, but they have made significant inroads against the harmful effects of tobacco.

Because of that significant progress, we have scaled back our investments in tobacco control to allow us to focus on new public health challenges. Yet the moral injunction of medicine is “First, do no harm.” As we wound down these investments (though ongoing, we are still providing \$3,589,258 to reduce tobacco use), I was adamant that we needed to monitor the state of tobacco control going forward and to assess the legacy and impact of our body of tobacco-control work.

As we address other critical public health challenges, like the need to roll back the epidemic of childhood obesity, it is important to harvest lessons that can be learned from our tobacco-control work, which has been unique in terms of magnitude, duration, scope and methods. We therefore asked the Center for Public Program Evaluation to conduct an independent assessment to help us and the field understand the results of our efforts, what worked, what didn’t, and what could be adopted or adapted to fulfill our mission to improve and make a demonstrable difference in health and health care for all Americans.

I wish to emphasize our insistence that the center’s work be truly independent. The center’s president, George Grob, is a former Deputy Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, who personally took charge of this assessment. Grob asked Henry Aaron, Bruce and Virginia MacLaury, senior fellow and former director of economic studies at the Brookings Institution, and Michael O’Grady, senior fellow at the National Opinion Research Center and principal, O’Grady Health Policy, to provide an additional layer of independent review. Aaron and O’Grady advised on study methods and findings, and reviewed draft reports. The resulting assessment report describes both the significance and limits of RWJF’s contributions and achievements.

I want to thank the many individuals and organizations—often working in collaboration—who conducted the tobacco-control campaigns, and I especially want to thank the many RWJF staff members (and former staff) who have worked with such competence and endurance on reducing Americans’ addiction to tobacco. Among them were: Diane Barker, Michael Beachler, Sallie Petrucci George, Karen Gerlach, Marjorie Gutman, Robert Hughes, Nancy Kaufman, Jim Knickman, Michelle Larkin, Joe Marx, Tracy Orleans, Marjorie Paloma and Steven Schroeder, and many others behind the scenes and too numerous to name.

### **Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A.**

*President and Chief Executive Officer  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

## Major Tobacco-Related Events in the United States

### World War II

Tobacco companies provide free Lucky Strike cigarettes to soldiers and cigarettes are included in soldiers' c-rations. During the war, many women go to work and start smoking for the first time (U.S. Army Medical Department, Olstad, Jacobs).

### Late 1940s, early 1950s

Tobacco becomes a major source of revenue for local, state and federal governments through consumption taxes. As a result, elected officials are reluctant to impose new regulations on tobacco marketing and sales (U.S. Army Medical Department).

### 1950s

Tobacco companies promote their cigarettes aggressively through advertisements and sponsorship of television shows (Olstad).

Tobacco consumption peaks in the early 1950s at approximately 13 pounds of tobacco per person: 80% as cigarettes, 10% as cigars, 4% as chewing tobacco and 3% as snuff (Giovino). The market share for filter cigarettes increases from 0.3% in 1949 to 51% in 1960 (Giovino).

### 1950

Smoking is first linked to several kinds of cancer, including lung cancer, and to other diseases in an article published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA). Doll and Hill publish a paper in the *British Medical Journal* reporting that heavy smokers are 50 times more likely than nonsmokers to develop lung cancer (U.S. Army Medical Department; University of California, San Francisco [UCSF]).

### 1951

Congress increases the federal excise tax on cigarettes from 7 cents to 8 cents a pack (Elders).

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**1952**

*Reader's Digest* publishes "Cancer by the Carton," describing the dangers of smoking. Similar reports began appearing in other periodicals. The next year, cigarette sales drop for the first time in more than 20 years (CNN, UCSF).

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**1953**

Tobacco executives meet with their attorneys and public relations experts to discuss their response to increasing public awareness of the dangers of cigarette smoking (UCSF).

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**1954**

Major U.S. tobacco companies form the Tobacco Industry Research Committee to fight growing health concerns about cigarettes. The committee, together with the major cigarette manufacturers, issues full-page ads in major newspapers declaring that their products are "not injurious to health."

Tobacco companies begin following the committee's advice to sell filtered and low-tar cigarettes, claiming these are healthier despite the lack of evidence. For example, filtered Kents, whose Micronite filter contains asbestos, are promoted as the "greatest health protection in cigarette history." "Tar wars," also known as the "tar derby," break out as inconsistent claims are made for these products. Consumers have no way to compare tar content (UCSF, Parker-Pope, CNN, Boyle, Peeler).

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**1955**

Philip Morris introduces the Marlboro Man to broaden the appeal of its Marlboro brand, which had been marketed as a mild women's cigarette. The original newspaper ad slogan is "delivers the goods on flavor" and it results in skyrocketing sales. Eventually, one Marlboro Man testifies in favor of anti-smoking legislation and three die of lung cancer (*Advertising Age*, National Public Radio [NPR]).

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) publishes cigarette advertising guides prohibiting claims that a particular cigarette brand is low in tar and nicotine or has lower levels of these toxins than other brands when no scientific proof is available to back up these claims (Peeler).

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**1956**

A Surgeon General's scientific study group identifies a causal relationship between excessive cigarette smoking and lung cancer (CDC timeline).

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**1957**

Actor Humphrey Bogart dies of throat cancer at age 57 (*Seattle Times*).

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**1960s**

Cigarette makers conduct extensive research to create a safer cigarette with the goal of removing toxins without changing the taste or smoking experience. Strategies include developing synthetic tobacco, increasing nicotine levels in low-tar cigarettes, filtering out the most toxic substances in cigarette smoke and removing or decreasing various carcinogenic compounds (nitrosamines, aldehydes, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metal traces). While researchers can reduce the levels of one or two dangerous compounds, they increase the level of other compounds or change the cigarette's composition so much that consumers do not accept it (Parker-Pope).

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**1962**

British Royal College of Physicians report emphasizes smoking's causative role in lung cancer (U.S. Army Medical Department, CDC timeline).

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**1963**

Americans consume, on average, 4,345 cigarettes per person each year (Giovino).

Edward R. Murrow dies of lung cancer at age 54 ([www.tobacco.org](http://www.tobacco.org)).

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**1964**

In the first major report on smoking and health, the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Smoking and Health releases *Smoking and Health*, which reviews more than 7,000 scientific studies and concludes that cigarette smoking causes lung cancer, emphysema and other diseases. Congress mandates publication of additional reports (CBS News, CNN, Olstad, Warner).

Per capita consumption of cigarettes, which had been rising steadily throughout the 1950s, reaches its peak in 1963. Three months after the Surgeon General's report was issued, per capita consumption decreases by almost 15%, although many smokers subsequently relapse (Warner).

Insurance companies begin offering discounts to nonsmokers (CBS News).

The FTC proposes the Trade Regulation Rule on Cigarette Labeling and Advertising, which would let the FTC regulate the images and content of cigarette ads and prohibit health claims. Cigarette companies avoid FTC regulation by establishing a voluntary cigarette advertising code (UCSF).

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**1965**

Congress passes the Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act, requiring all cigarette packages to display a warning from the Surgeon General. The first warning labels ("Caution: Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazardous to Your Health") appear on cigarette packages the following year (CNN, Warner, UCSF).

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1967

The FTC rules that cigarette ads must comply with the Fairness Doctrine, requiring that broadcasters who air cigarette ads also air smoking-prevention messages. Per capita cigarette consumption declines over the next four years, until the cigarette ads are banned (CBS News, Warner, UCSF).

The FTC releases its first report on tar and nicotine levels in cigarette brands, and subsequently issues regular reports.

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1968

Philip Morris launches Virginia Slims, the first cigarette brand specifically targeted at women, with the “You’ve Come a Long Way Baby” advertising campaign. Marketing cigarettes as “slims” or “thins” appeals to young women who feel socially pressured to control their weight, manage stress and appear grown up (Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids).

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1969

The National Association of Broadcasters agrees to phase out cigarette ads (CBS News).

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1970

Congress passes the Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act, strengthening the cigarette label’s warning (“Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking is Dangerous to Your Health”) and banning cigarette advertising on television and radio in the United States (Warner, UCSF).

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1971

Broadcast cigarette advertising ends on January 2, 1971, and broadcasters are no longer required to give free airtime to anti-smoking public service announcements. Per-capita consumption of cigarettes increases that year and in the subsequent two years (U.S. Army Medical Department, CBS News, Warner, UCSF).

Several studies conclude that the Fairness Doctrine counterads were more effective in reducing smoking than the cigarette ads were in increasing it and that the ban on broadcast ads had no effect on smoking. One study showed that the ad ban resulted in a 5% increase in per-capita tobacco consumption, partly because cigarette prices decreased as tobacco companies reduced their advertising budgets (Warner).

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1972

The 1972 Surgeon General’s report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking*, is the first of several science-based reports to identify environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) as a health risk to nonsmokers (CDC timeline).

An FTC consent order extends the warning label to cigarette ads as well as to packages (Warner).

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**1973**

The Civil Aeronautics Board requires all commercial airlines to have nonsmoking sections (CBS News, UCSF).

Arizona becomes the first state to restrict smoking in several public places explicitly because ETS exposure is a public hazard (CBS News, CDC timeline, UCSF).

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**1975**

The Army and Navy stop including cigarettes in rations for service members (CDC timeline).

Minnesota passes the Clean Indoor Air Law, which restricts smoking in public places and at public meetings, except in designated smoking areas (UCSF).

Between 1950 and 1975, the market share of filtered cigarettes increases from 1% to 87% (Glantz).

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**1976**

Ernest Pepples, vice president and general counsel at Brown & Williamson, said, “the smoker of a filter cigarette was getting as much or more nicotine and tar as he would have gotten from a regular cigarette. He had abandoned the regular cigarette, however, on the grounds of reduced risk to health” (Parker-Pope).

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**1977**

Doctors Ought to Care, a physicians’ organization, begins the first paid marketing campaign against the tobacco industry with ads on bus benches in Miami (UCSF).

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**1979**

Smoking is restricted in all federal government facilities (CDC timeline).

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**1981**

A Surgeon General’s report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking: The Changing Cigarette*, concludes that no level of cigarette smoking is safe (CBS News).

The *British Medical Journal* publishes the first prospective study showing that ETS causes lung cancer, after following the nonsmoking wives of heavy smokers in Japan (UCSF).

The FTC informs Congress that health warning labels have little effect on the public’s smoking-related knowledge and attitudes (UCSF).

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1982

Congress passes the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act, which increases the federal excise tax to 16 cents per cigarette pack starting in 1983 (CBS News).

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1983

Rose Cipollone, a smoker with lung cancer, files suit against the Liggett Group, claiming that the company failed to warn her about the dangers of its products. Cipollone initially wins a \$400,000 judgment against the company in 1988, but the U.S. Supreme Court sends the case back for a new trial. After Cipollone's death, her family is unable to afford the cost of continued litigation and drops the suit (CNN, UCSF).

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1984

Congress enacts the Comprehensive Smoking Education Act, requiring rotating warnings on cigarette packages and ads. The tobacco industry successfully lobbies against stronger labels that would warn the public about nicotine's addictive properties (UCSF).

Dow Chemical introduces Nicorette, a nicotine gum and the first pharmaceutical smoking deterrent, for sale by prescription (Keeler).

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1986

The U.S. Surgeon General publishes *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Smoking*, which finds that exposure to ETS causes lung cancer and other diseases in healthy nonsmokers, that children of smokers have more respiratory symptoms and infections than children of nonsmokers, and that separating smokers and nonsmokers within the same air space does not eliminate exposure. In *Environmental Tobacco Smoke: Measuring Exposure and Assessing Health Effects*, the National Academy of Sciences reaches similar conclusions (CDC Perspectives, UCSF).

Between 1986 and 1993, smoking rates among workers drop by 2.6% more than among nonworkers, possibly due to the increase in workplace smoking bans (Evans).

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1988

In *The Health Consequences of Smoking: Nicotine Addiction*, the Surgeon General concludes that nicotine is addictive (CBS News, UCSF).

Congress prohibits smoking on domestic commercial airline flights scheduled to last two hours or less (CBS News, CDC timeline).

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company launches its "Joe Camel" campaign in the United States, featuring a cartoon camel that it had first introduced in 1913 (Warner, Pierce).

Articles published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* report that children are as familiar with Joe Camel as they are with Mickey Mouse and that the campaign is more successful with children than adults (UCSF).

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**Late 1980s and 1990s**

Several states (including Alaska, Arizona, California, Maine, Massachusetts and New York) raise their tobacco excise taxes substantially, using the proceeds to launch statewide tobacco-control programs (Farrelly).

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**1990**

Congress bans smoking on virtually all domestic commercial flights (CBS News, CDC timeline, UCSF).

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**1991**

Congress increases the federal cigarette excise tax to 20 cents per pack (CBS News).

The FDA approves nicotine patches to help smokers quit (CBS News).

Congress passes the Synar amendment to the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration Reorganization Act, requiring states to prohibit the sale or distribution of tobacco products to minors (Warner, Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium [TTAC]).

Janet Mangini sues R.J. Reynolds to end the Joe Camel ad campaign, becoming the first person to challenge the tobacco industry in court for targeting children with its ads (UCSF).

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**1992**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classifies ETS as a “Group A” carcinogen, the most dangerous class (CDC timeline).

The federal government requires all states to pass a law banning tobacco sales to minors by 1994 or risk losing up to 40% of their Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment block grant (CBS News, Office of the Inspector General [OIG]).

The British Medical Association begins publishing *Tobacco Control*, the first academic journal focused on scholarly research about tobacco use (UCSF).

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**1993**

Smoking is banned in the White House (CDC timeline).

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**1994**

Mississippi becomes the first state to sue the tobacco industry to recover Medicaid costs for tobacco-related illnesses, and 45 other states file similar suits (CBS News, CDC timeline, CNN, UCSF).

Seven CEOs of the major cigarette companies testify before Congress that nicotine is not addictive and that they do not manipulate nicotine levels in the cigarettes they manufacture (CBS News, UCSF).

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) proposes the first indoor air quality rule, calling for ventilation to control indoor air contaminants and separately ventilated smoking rooms to control ETS exposure. The tobacco companies exert influence during the public comment period and OSHA drops this proposal in 2001 (Evans, Bryan-Jones).

After ABC's Day One reports that cigarette companies manipulate the delivery of nicotine in cigarettes, Philip Morris sues ABC for \$12 billion. Shortly before it is purchased by Disney, ABC settles the Philip Morris lawsuit, issues a prime-time apology, and pays \$15 million to Philip Morris. The Day One producers refuse to be a party to the agreement (UCSF).

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### 1995

*JAMA* publishes articles stating that tobacco companies knew about smoking's harmful effects and that nicotine is addictive (CBS News).

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### Mid-1990s

Four states settle their Medicaid-related litigation individually with the tobacco industry (Florida and Mississippi in 1997, Texas and Minnesota in 1998) (CDC timeline).

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### 1996

The FDA declares that nicotine is an addictive drug and cigarettes are drug-delivery devices, and asserts the right to regulate it. Court challenges from the tobacco manufacturers, retailers and advertisers are filed shortly afterward (UCSF, Olstad).

For the first time, a cigarette company takes responsibility for tobacco-related death and disease when the Liggett Group makes cash payments to four states to settle their legal actions, withdraws its opposition to FDA regulation and accepts advertising limits (UCSF).

SmithKline Beecham launches over-the-counter (OTC) sales of Nicorette gum and the Nicoderm patch and McNeil begins to sell its Nicotrol patch over the counter. After OTC products become available, use of nicotine gum increases by approximately 180% and nicotine patches by as much as 90% (Keeler).

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### 1997

The tobacco industry settles a class-action suit with flight attendants over secondhand smoke by providing \$300 million to fund a foundation to support research on diseases caused by tobacco smoke (CBS News, UCSF).

A federal district court judge rules that the FDA has the authority to regulate tobacco as a drug (CBS News, UCSF).

R.J. Reynolds ends the Joe Camel campaign to settle the Mangini case (UCSF).

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**1998**

Tobacco executives finally admit to Congress that nicotine is addictive and smoking might cause cancer (UCSF).

The tobacco industry approves the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) with 46 states, the District of Columbia and five commonwealth territories, totaling nearly \$206 billion and to be paid through 2025. Mississippi, Florida, Texas and Minnesota had settled separate lawsuits in 1997 and 1998. (CBS News, CDC timeline, Warner, TTAC).

The MSA includes a ban on cigarette ads in magazines with a large youth readership and removal of all advertising from outdoor and transit billboards across the country. The agreement also includes \$250 million annually for the “Truth Campaign,” a national public education fund administered by the American Legacy Foundation, to discourage children from smoking and help adults quit. Recent research shows that the Truth Campaign has changed attitudes toward smoking among teenagers (Warner).

Industry leaders discuss limiting liability suits in return for agreeing to legislation restricting tobacco sales and use (CBS News).

98% of cigarettes consumed in the United States have filters (Giovino).

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**1999**

The U.S. Justice Department sues the tobacco industry under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), claiming the industry had engaged “in a lengthy, unlawful conspiracy to deceive the American public about the health effects of smoking and environmental smoke” (CBS News).

The average amount of tobacco consumed per person in 1999 is 4.2 pounds: 83% in cigarettes, 6% in cigars, 5% as snuff, 5% as chewing tobacco, and 1% as smoking tobacco (Giovino).

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**2000**

The U.S. Supreme Court rules that the FDA lacks jurisdiction under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act to regulate tobacco products as drugs without action from Congress (CBS News, CDC timeline, UCSF).

A Florida jury awards millions of dollars to two smokers, and, with the case certified as a class-action lawsuit, orders the five largest tobacco companies to pay more than \$145 billion in punitive damages to ailing smokers in the state (CBS News).

Smoking is prohibited on all flights between the U.S. and foreign destinations (UCSF).

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**2001**

A Brooklyn jury orders several tobacco companies to pay an insurance company up to \$17.8 million, accepting its argument that the industry's deceptive marketing practices had led more of its insured members to smoke (CBS News).

The Bush administration seeks a settlement in the Justice Department's RICO lawsuit against tobacco companies, which sought reimbursement for federal monies spent on tobacco-related illnesses (CBS News).

The Surgeon General publishes *Women and Smoking*, which calls smoking-related disease among women "a full-blown epidemic" (UCSF).

The National Cancer Institute publishes *Risks Associated with Smoking Cigarettes with Low Machine-Measured Yields of Tar and Nicotine*, which shows that smoking cigarettes low in tar and nicotine does not reduce disease risk (UCSF).

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**2002**

A California jury awards \$28 billion in punitive damages to a former smoker in a lawsuit filed against Philip Morris for fraud and negligence (CBS News).

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**2003**

A Florida appeals court rejects the \$145 billion verdict in 2000 against the tobacco industry, arguing that it should not have been a class-action suit. The court also agrees with the tobacco companies that the suit would have violated state law by bankrupting the companies (CBS News).

The U.S. Supreme Court declines to hear arguments about an \$80 million award to a smoker's widow against Philip Morris but says that the lower courts should review its 1999 verdict (CBS News).

The World Health Organization adopts the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), which provides the legal basis for national tobacco-control activities and helps coordinate the international response. The FCTC enters into force on February 27, 2005 in the 114 countries that have ratified the treaty. The U.S. has signed the treaty but has not yet ratified it. (TTAC).

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**2005**

Although the U.S. population has more than doubled since 1951, total cigarette consumption remains the same. Total consumption is 20% lower than in 1998, when the Master Settlement Agreement was signed (TTAC).

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2006

The Florida Supreme Court dismisses the \$145 billion punitive damages award against tobacco companies for injuring smokers, calling the award excessive. The justices also uphold an appellate court ruling that the lawsuit had mistakenly been certified a class action (CBS News).

U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler rules in favor of the U.S. government in its civil racketeering case, agreeing that the tobacco industry had conspired for decades to deceive the public about the dangers of smoking (CBS News).

A federal judge grants class-action status to millions of “light cigarette” smokers in a potential \$200 billion lawsuit that includes anyone who bought cigarettes labeled “light” since the early 1970s. The lawsuit alleges that tobacco companies misled smokers (CBS News).

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2007

The Supreme Court throws out the case involving an \$80 million verdict against Philip Morris because the jury had not been told it could punish the company only for the harm done to the plaintiff, and not to other smokers (CBS News).

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2008

Philip Morris launches a campaign to market Virginia Slims cigarettes in mauve and teal “purse packs” sold as “Super Slim Lights” and “Super Slim Ultra Lights” (Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids).

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2009

Congress approves the largest-ever boost to the federal cigarette excise tax, increasing it by 62 cents to \$1.01 a pack.

Congress passes the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, giving the FDA authority to regulate tobacco. The legislation allows the FDA to establish standards and restrictions on advertising, warning labels, hazardous ingredients and new products, including those that purport to be “reduced risk” (Olstad).

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2010

The U.S. Supreme Court declines to hear the appeal to the Justice Department’s racketeering case against the tobacco industry and Judge Gladys Kessler’s decision, as slightly modified by an appeals court, is allowed to stand. The tobacco industry is banned from using certain cigarette labels, such as “low tar” and “mild,” and required to publish “corrective statements” in various media about the health risks of tobacco.

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