



February 23, 2012

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Alexander:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to S. 1461, legislation you have cosponsored that would exempt many cigars from regulation under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, P.L. 111-31. We believe the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should retain the authority to regulate all tobacco products, including cigars. Products containing tobacco cause disease and no tobacco products should be exempted from oversight by the agency.

While the health risks of cigar smoking are not the same as cigarette smoking, cigar smoke is composed of the same toxic and carcinogenic constituents found in cigarette smoke. According to the National Cancer Institute, cigar smoking causes cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus and lung, and cigar smokers are at increased risk for an aortic aneurysm. Daily cigar smokers, particularly those who inhale, have an increased risk of heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). It is also important to note that cigar smoking is not limited to adults; it is the second most common form of tobacco use among youth. According to national surveys, nearly one in five (18.6 percent) high school boys currently smoke cigars (i.e., large cigars, cigarillos, and small cigars), and each day more than 3,400 kids under 18 years old try cigar smoking for the first time.

With strong bipartisan support, Congress gave FDA authority over the manufacture, sale and marketing of all tobacco products, including cigars, in 2009. The statute explicitly defines tobacco products as "any product made or derived from tobacco that is intended for human consumption..." and cigars clearly fall under this definition.

Congress appropriately gave the FDA the flexibility to determine the type of regulation that is appropriate for different tobacco products. While the Act immediately applied all of FDA's new authorities to cigarettes, cigarette tobacco, roll-your-own tobacco, and smokeless tobacco, it established a process for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to assert jurisdiction over other tobacco products, including cigars, and determine which requirements are appropriate for the protection of public health.

FDA has indicated it intends to propose a rule to deem cigars subject to Chapter IX of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FDCA), but it has not indicated which specific provisions or regulations will apply to cigars. Congress should not now reverse course and exempt cigars, or certain types of cigars, from oversight. Maintaining FDA's current authority will ensure that any proposal about cigars is based on science and will be open to participation by all interested parties through Notice and Comment rulemaking.

S. 1461 would prohibit FDA from promulgating any regulations involving certain types of cigars regardless of how significant the benefit to public health or how minimal the cost to cigar manufacturers. We are particularly concerned about the wide range of products that may claim to be exempted from any regulation under the bill, including Swisher Sweets Sweet Chocolate Blunts, Phillies Sugarillos Cigarillos (described on the box as "when sweet isn't enough!"), White Owl grape Blunts Xtra, and Optimo peach Blunts. These products come in flavors and are among the most popular with youth.

We strongly urge you to withdraw your support for this legislation.

Sincerely,

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Academy of General Dentistry
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
American Academy of Oral Medicine
American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Periodontology
American Association for Cancer Research
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American College of Cardiology
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Dental Association
American Medical Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Thoracic Society
Association of Black Cardiologists
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund
Lung Cancer Alliance
National Association of City and Country Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of Health
National Physicians Alliance
National Research Center for Women and Families
Oral Health America
Oncology Nursing Society
Partnership for Prevention
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society