

Big Tobacco Finally Forced to Tell the Truth About its Deadly Products Through Court-Ordered Advertisements

Truth Initiative® dedicated to amplifying this message to reach youth and young adults

Big Tobacco has been lying about the deadly effects of cigarettes and manipulating the American people for decades. In 2006, the tobacco industry was found to have violated civil racketeering laws, and as a result, was ordered to tell the truth about the deadly and harmful effects of cigarettes.

Now, after fighting and delaying the court's order for 11 years, Big Tobacco has finally been forced to begin publishing advertisements, or "corrective statements" outlining these truths. The ads will appear in about 50 newspapers and on major broadcast networks nationwide articulating the ills of tobacco.

The first "corrective statement" outlines these chilling facts:

- Cigarette companies intentionally designed cigarettes with enough nicotine to create and sustain addiction.
- More people die every year from smoking than from murder, AIDS, suicide, drugs, car crashes, and alcohol, **combined**.
- All cigarettes cause cancer, lung disease, heart attacks, and premature death – lights, low tar, ultra lights, and naturals. There is no safe cigarette.
- There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

Stemming from a lawsuit filed by the Justice Department in 1999 and a landmark judgment issued in August 2006 by U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler, the federal courts found Altria, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, Lorillard, and Phillip Morris USA to be in violation of civil racketeering (RICO) laws. The courts ruled that the companies systematically defrauded the American people by lying for decades about, among other things, the health effects of smoking and their marketing to children.

In her 1,683-page opinion, Judge Kessler detailed how the tobacco companies "marketed and sold their lethal products with zeal, with deception, with a single-minded focus on their financial success, and without regard for the human tragedy or social costs that success exacted." Judge Kessler concluded, "The evidence in this case clearly establishes that Defendants have not ceased engaging in unlawful activity."

Yet, Big Tobacco purposefully delayed complying with the ruling for over a decade in order to minimize its impact, even fighting to get the words, "Here is the truth" removed from the ads.

The mandated media buy which requires ads be placed in 50 newspapers over 4 months and during primetime on the major networks over 52 weeks, did not take into account the inevitable rise in popularity of digital platforms for media consumption. Therefore, many young people who should be seeing the advertisements, won't. Since the lawsuit started in the late 1990s, an entire generation of young people has been born and grown up in a vastly changed media landscape. The majority of young people no longer spend their time consuming prime time television or reading newspapers.

Truth Initiative, America's largest non-profit public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco, has been fighting to expose Big Tobacco's lies since its inception. Truth Initiative also directs and funds **truth**, one of the largest and most effective youth smoking prevention campaigns.

“The American public will, at last, see and hear – directly from the tobacco companies – about the deadly and life-altering effects of cigarettes,” said Robin Koval, CEO and President of Truth Initiative. “And though we are pleased that the tobacco industry is finally telling the truth, they are doing it in a way that is as invisible and unwatchable as possible – essentially creating ads that they hope no one will see. The ads designed by Big Tobacco, with black type on a white screen narrated by a monotonal voice, will likely go unnoticed by many – especially the young people that are Big Tobacco’s “replacement smokers.” It’s now our mission to shine a light on the facts and ensure that young people see them.”

With justice delayed, justice is denied. In the many years Big Tobacco spent delaying the corrective statements, approximately five million people have died from tobacco-related disease and the number of people who die each day from tobacco-related diseases has gone from 1,200 a day to 1,300. Despite significant progress in reducing smoking, tobacco use is still the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States.

“What is needed is corrective action, not corrective statements,” said Koval. “If the tobacco companies really wanted to make a difference, they would stop fighting tobacco control efforts that are proven to reduce consumption, including graphic warnings on packaging, menthol bans and higher taxes on tobacco products and better yet, they should stop selling a product that kills half of its users.”

FOR SOCIAL/WEB:

Title: Big Tobacco is finally forced to tell the truth

Teaser: The tobacco industry has begun publishing advertisements, or “corrective statements,” outlining the truth about the deadly and harmful effects of cigarettes.

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