

## **Philip Morris International's Announcement to Spend Nearly \$1 Billion to End Smoking Sounds Like Fake News**

**Statement by Robin Koval, CEO & President, Truth Initiative®**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Philip Morris International's (PMI) recent announcement that it is establishing the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World is an affront to public health, educators, researchers and advocates around the world who have been working tirelessly for decades to end the tobacco use epidemic. The fact that PMI claims to want to end smoking while, at the same time, being the world's foremost seller of cigarettes, truly sounds like fake news.

Beginning in 2018, PMI plans to contribute \$80 million annually over the next 12 years to the foundation. It claims these funds will be dedicated to accelerating global efforts to reduce deaths and harm from smoking, with the goal of eliminating smoking worldwide. If PMI really wanted to end cigarette use, it would immediately stop its relentless opposition to proven effective tobacco control efforts such as clean indoor air, higher taxation and plain package labeling. It would simultaneously stop selling cigarettes. But, not surprisingly, that's not what this announcement is about at all. In fact, PMI has been completely silent on any companion announcement to reduce marketing support for its combustible products or to eliminate their opposition and legal challenges to tobacco control efforts worldwide. They have been silent about such efforts because there is no evidence that they exist.

History has proven, time and time again, that the tobacco industry only looks out for its best interest. In 1954, a Philip Morris vice president stated, "[I]f we had any thought or knowledge that in any way we were selling a product harmful to our customers, we would stop business tomorrow." In 1997, then-Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible said in a deposition that the company would halt production if presented with evidence that smoking causes lung cancer, stating he would "shut it down instantly." Despite those statements, cigarettes continue to make up most of Philip Morris International's business – a \$75 billion a year enterprise that distributes enough cigarettes to supply five packs a year to every person on the planet.

The new Foundation for a Smoke-Free World raises the specter of the era when Philip Morris and other tobacco companies sought to establish industry-favorable research via the creation and funding of alleged independent research organizations, such as the "Council for Tobacco Research (CTR)" and the "Center for Indoor Air Research (CIAR)." Ultimately, the purpose of these organizations was to protect the industry from litigation threats and government regulation by distributing questionable science to distract from the irrefutable evidence of the death and disease caused by tobacco. As a result, one of the conditions of the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement required the industry to dissolve these organizations. The profit motives of the tobacco industry and public health are simply incompatible, and this is a Pandora's Box that should remain closed.

The assertion that the goal of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World is to eliminate smoking worldwide is disingenuous. This claim cannot be taken seriously as long as its primary funder, PMI, continues to manufacture, sell and market cigarettes and fight tobacco control efforts around the world. Truth Initiative® will continue to reveal the truth and expose the tactics of the tobacco industry and we strongly encourage all others who seek the end of the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., at the rate of 540,000 lives per year, to do the same.

### **About Truth Initiative**

Truth Initiative® is a national public health organization that is inspiring tobacco-free lives and building a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**® public-education campaign, our rigorous and scientific research and policy studies, and our innovative community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco. The Washington, D.C.-based organization, formerly known as Legacy, was established and funded through the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories and the tobacco industry. To learn more about our work speaking, seeking and spreading the truth about tobacco, visit [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).