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Surgeon General's Report Confirms Youth Should Not Use E-Cigarettes

Statement from Robin Koval, CEO & President, Truth Initiative

Washington, DC (December 8, 2016) – The Surgeon General's report on e-cigarettes released today confirms the indisputable fact that youth should not be using nicotine or tobacco in any form. We are pleased that the Nation's Doctor is now on record emphasizing the importance of keeping e-cigarettes away from young people, while outlining imperative calls to action as it relates to health risks, regulation and youth targeted marketing tactics. This report will serve as an important tool in Truth Initiative's arsenal to accomplish our mission: to achieve a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco in all forms.

It is not surprising that youth and young adults are attracted to e-cigarettes, and national prevalence data have made this very clear with a steady increase in last 30-day use of e-cigarettes by teens and young adults. As we continue to assess the risk of e-cigarettes to youth, it is important to recognize that last 30-day use isn't the entire picture. As the report emphasizes, we must further monitor the progression from experimental to more regular use and addictive behavior. Regardless of whether e-cigarettes are a "gateway" to cigarettes or other tobacco products, the report underscores the fact that youth need to be protected from nicotine use in any form and the value and urgency of common sense regulations – starting with enforcement of the newly enacted deeming regulation and then addressing the availability of youth-appealing candy and fruit flavors. Furthermore, it's critical that manufacturers are not free to modify the delivery of nicotine through e-cigarettes to increase their potential for addiction as they did for decades with cigarettes.

This report underscores the importance of FDA regulation of ALL tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, to limit the marketing and appeal of these products to young people. We have the right to know what goes into the products—this is a basic consumer protection. We know what's in a bag of Cheetos®. We should absolutely know what's in every tobacco product on the market, and that must include e-cigarettes.

Further steps should also be taken to end enticing youth to nicotine use through the marketing of flavored tobacco and nicotine products, which are the dominant starter products for youth and prominently featured in e-cigarettes. Research shows that young people are more likely to try flavored e-cigarettes and believe they are less harmful than tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes. While

flavors may play a role in attracting adult smokers to switch to safer products, manufacturers should not be allowed unfettered access to kids, and the presence of products with names like “strawberry shortcake” and “unicorn vomit.” Moves like these make us very concerned that some e-cigarette makers are making the most of the unregulated opportunity to recruit a new generation of nicotine users.

We are hopeful that in the future, the Surgeon General will clarify the confusion around the potential of e-cigarettes as a cessation tool for adult smokers. E-cigarettes are substantially less harmful than combustible cigarettes and smokers who can’t otherwise quit with a FDA-approved nicotine replacement product, could switch completely to e-cigarettes as a means to stop smoking altogether. Regulation will be a key component in making sure smokers have access to products that are subject to standard norms of quality control and consumer safety. The Surgeon General could be a powerful voice for clarifying that well-regulated reduced harm nicotine products have the potential to help the 36.5 million current smokers to quit or switch and eventually, save millions of lives.

Public education campaigns targeted to youth and young adults, like Truth Initiative’s **truth**,[®] campaign have made tremendous advances in preventing youth from using an array of tobacco products. This report is both a wake-up call and a call to action to keep e-cigarettes out of the hands and mouths of youth and young adults through counter-marketing and education. Big Tobacco spends more than \$9 billion every year to market their products and tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. We look forward to working with the Surgeon General to make this the generation that ends smoking for good.

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.