

February 27, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you as national leaders of America's faith community on behalf of our clergy and lay members to strongly urge you send the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the international tobacco control treaty, to the United States Senate to be immediately considered for ratification.

U.S. ratification of the treaty is critical to ensuring that the U.S. remains a leader in protecting public health around the world. As home to Philip Morris, the world's largest multinational tobacco company, the U.S. has a special obligation to provide global leadership in reducing the alarming rates of death and disease caused by tobacco use. The U.S. has historically been a leader in protecting public health around the world and can play that role again by ratifying the tobacco treaty and supporting its effective implementation domestically and internationally.

We in the faith community believe we have a moral obligation to do all that we can in order to save countless lives from the horrors of tobacco caused death and illness. Our clergy spends much too much time burying mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers who die an untimely and grueling death because they became addicted to tobacco when they were young. We know all too well how the tobacco companies have spent, and continue to spend, hundreds of millions of dollars to addict young and old to this deadly product.

The treaty gives nations powerful new tools to protect the health of their citizens from the tobacco industry's deceptions and slick marketing. It requires ratifying nations to adopt two policies proven to reduce smoking and save lives: a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, with an exception for nations with constitutional constraints (such as the U.S.), and large health warning labels that cover at least 30 percent of cigarette packs. The treaty also provides nations with a roadmap for enacting strong, science-based policies in other areas, including secondhand smoke protections, tobacco taxation, tobacco product regulation and measures to combat cigarette smuggling.

Tobacco use already kills nearly five million people a year around the world, and that number is projected to increase to 10 million a year by the year 2020 with 70 percent of those deaths in developing countries. This is a horrible tragedy that the treaty can help to reduce if it is widely adopted and effectively implemented by countries. We urge our government to join the over 50 countries that have ratified the tobacco treaty. By

ratifying this treaty, the United States can continue to be a leader in improving health and saving lives around the world.

Sincerely,

James Winkler, General Secretary  
General Board of Church and Society  
United Methodist Church  
Dr. DeWitt Williams, Director  
Health Ministries, North American Division  
Seventh Day Adventists

Sarah Ward, President  
Woman's Christian Temperance Union

Julie Taylor, Executive Secretary for Children, Youth and Family Advocacy,  
Women's Division, GBGM, United Methodist Church

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed  
Secretary General  
Islamic Society of North America

Rev. Deborah L. Patterson, Executive Director  
International Parish Nurse Resource Center

Rev. Kristina Peterson, Global Action Chair  
Church Women United

Phillip Jones, Director  
Brethren Witness/Washington Office,  
Church of the Brethren

Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory, Director  
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office

Rev. Michael H. Crosby, OFMCap., Coordinator  
Tobacco Program  
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility

Roy Branson, Co-Chair  
Inter-Religious Coalition on Smoking or Health

Barbara Baylor, M.P.H.  
Minister for Health and Wellness  
United Church of Christ

Sharon Adkins, President  
Health Ministries Association

Rev. A. Roy Medley, General Secretary  
American Baptist Churches USA

Noemi M. Fuentes, Program Associate Program on Substance Abuse and Related  
Violence (SPSARV)  
United Methodist Church

Kaye Edwards, Disciples Home Missions  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Karen Vagley, Director, Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America