

April 2, 2009

I rise today to voice my support of H.R. 1256, the "Family Smoking Prevention And Tobacco Control Act."

I feel strongly about the dangers of cigarettes and the need for regulation by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The dangers of smoking are well known--about one in five deaths in the United States can be attributed to tobacco products, which adds up to 440,000 Americans killed every year. Another 50,000 people die every year from secondhand smoke. Many of these deaths are linked to the thousands of harmful chemical compounds in every cigarette, including benzene, arsenic, formaldehyde, and ammonia.

I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of the H.R. 1256. This legislation would require the regulation of tobacco products by the FDA. This legislation would also require cigarette manufacturers to print warning labels with text warnings detailing the smoking related diseases such as lung, heart, or mouth cancer. The warning labels are required to occupy 30 percent of the front and rear panels of a cigarette package, carton, or advertisement.

Unfortunately, the lack of sufficient regulatory authority means that while the FDA works to keep harmful chemicals out of everyday food products, they have no ability to do the same with cigarettes. This bill, which enjoys the support of almost 700 public health groups, faith associations, and other organizations from around the country, would ensure that consumers are adequately informed about the real risks of tobacco use and protected from misleading advertising.

I have long supported giving the FDA clear authority to regulate cigarettes and other tobacco products and I urge my colleagues to pass this legislation granting them such authority.