



Cynthia A. Rice

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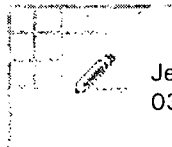
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To: Jerold R. Mande/OSTP/EOP, Mary L. Smith/OPD/EOP, Thomas L. Freedman/OPD/EOP

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Subject: AGs redux

----- Forwarded by Cynthia A. Rice/OPD/EOP on 03/11/98 09:12 PM -----



Jeffrey A. Shesol
03/11/98 08:52:02 PM

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To: Cynthia A. Rice/OPD/EOP

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Subject: AGs redux

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**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS TO THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATTORNEYS GENERAL
THE WASHINGTON COURT HOTEL
WASHINGTON, DC
March 12, 1998**

Acknowledgments: AG Reno; AG Jim Doyle of Wisconsin, Chair of the NAAG.

It's a privilege to address my former colleagues. I ran for attorney general for the same reasons you did--to protect families and consumers and to enforce the laws of my state. I want to thank you for being strong allies of this administration on everything from domestic violence to judicial appointments. Your leadership is important on all these fronts, and I applaud you for it.

In a sense, you and I are still colleagues. Because of the work this administration has done, and the work you have done, today we stand on the verge of one of the greatest public health achievements in history--a historic triumph in our fight to protect America's children from the deadly threat of tobacco. Together we've waged a great struggle--in the courts, in the Congress, and anywhere our nation's children have been targets of tobacco companies' mass-marketing schemes. And that's just about everywhere. The attorneys general know this,

because you've been on the front lines.

We've made great strides in just a few years. But when you're in the middle of a great struggle, it's difficult, sometimes, to see just how far you've come. And that's what I'd like to do today. First, to look back--to consider why we ever took on tobacco companies in the first place, in a fight so many people said was unwinnable. And then I want to look ahead--at what we can do to win that fight, and to ensure a healthier, stronger America for our children, and all of us, in the 21st century.

Our nation is poised to enter the next century stronger than it has been in decades. This is a great moment for America, a moment full of opportunities to extend the promise of peace and prosperity, and to widen the circle of opportunity. It is a moment to ensure that our deepest values endure in a century that will bring great change.

Much of the next century will belong to our children, and that is why we have worked so tirelessly, these five years, to raise them in safety, health, and security. Our growing economy is lifting families off the welfare rolls and into work. Our zero tolerance policy has helped keep guns and drugs out of schools. The V-chip and educational television have helped parents strengthen the values and minds of our children. We've worked to bring order and discipline to children's lives by supporting community efforts like curfews and school uniforms and tougher truancy laws. And last year, we helped make sure that millions of uninsured children get the medical coverage they deserve and the help they need.

This is a moment of great opportunity--to ride this powerful momentum forward into the future. And that is why we've challenged the tobacco industry--one of the most powerful industries in America--to fundamentally change the way it does business. The opportunity for change is great. And the stakes could not be higher. At stake is what America values most--its children. Their health, and their lives.

Smoking kills more people every day than AIDS, alcohol, auto accidents, murders, suicides, drugs and fires combined. Nearly 90 percent of those smokers lit their first cigarette before they turned 18. That's why David Kessler, the former FDA commissioner, called smoking a "pediatric disease." Today--and every day--3,000 children will start smoking. 1,000 of them will die prematurely because of it.

This is a national epidemic, and a national tragedy, and for the sake of our children we will wage this struggle until we win it for good.

Just last month, the Journal of the American Medical Association concluded that advertisements and promotions were even more crucial than peer pressure in getting teens to start smoking. Is this any wonder? The law says they can't advertise tobacco products on television or the radio, but you can't escape the advertisements anywhere else. Cigarette ads in our magazines. Cigarette ads in our sports centers. Cigarette ads on our billboards. Tobacco is one of the most heavily advertised products in America. In the early 1990s, Joe Camel alone had an advertising budget of \$75 million a year. A pretty good investment, from

the tobacco companies' point of view: more 3-to-6-year-olds could recognize Joe Camel than they could Mickey Mouse.

These advertisements have taken a deadly toll. And that's why, in 1995, I launched a nationwide effort to prevent tobacco companies from advertising to children, to educate kids about the dangers of smoking, and to reduce children's access to tobacco products. Working with the FDA, we made the law of the land what was already the law in every one of your states--no sale of tobacco products to anyone under 18. And we'll ID anyone under 27 to make sure teens can't buy cigarettes. I'm very pleased that the courts last year upheld this authority.

Without the foresight and the courage and the determination of the attorneys general who join us here today, the progress we've made would be unthinkable. You put tobacco companies on the stand in courtrooms across the land. You brought them to the bargaining table and extracted important concessions. You raised awareness of tobacco's tragic costs to our economy and our children. Your work has been essential, and I applaud you for it.

The worst part of this epidemic is that it is the product not of deadly natural forces raging out of control, but a sophisticated marketing campaign targeted at America's children. If not for your efforts, we might have waited another thirty years for the documents that have confirmed our worst suspicions about the tobacco industry. For years, we've known that cigarette makers study our kids' habits and tastes, preying on them with targeted marketing. Joe Camel T-shirts, CD's, Virginia Slims rock concerts, toy race-cars emblazoned with tobacco company logos--the free give-aways tell the tale. And just last year, some tobacco companies wanted to market what was called a "kiddie pack"--smaller, more affordable packs of cigarettes. Sort of a starter kit.

As more and more documents are released, we're learning the whole story. In an internal document, one tobacco company proudly described its brand as "the brand of choice among teenagers." Another described its plan to flavor cigarettes with apples, honey, or Coca-Cola, because "it's a well-known fact that teenagers like sweet products." And another tobacco company memorandum put it even more bluntly. "The 14-24 age group," it says, "... represent tomorrow's cigarette business."

This avalanche of evidence is bringing down the walls of deceit. Their conclusion is inescapable: that America needs and Congress must pass comprehensive tobacco legislation that gets the tobacco industry out of the business of marketing cigarettes to our children.

Thirty years of deception--and only Congress can bring it to an end. Thirty years of manipulation--and only Congress can bring it to an end. And thirty years of deception and manipulation cannot be met with even a day of delay.

There are scarcely more than 60 days left in this legislative session. The calendar tells us this is an election year, but the American people tell us they want this to be a legislating year. And Congress should not go home until it passes comprehensive tobacco legislation that

protects our children.

I have said I would support any comprehensive, bipartisan tobacco legislation that meets five principles: it must raise the price of cigarettes by up to \$1.50 a pack over the next decade and impose tough penalties on companies that continue to sell to kids; it must reaffirm the FDA's authority to regulate tobacco products; it must get tobacco companies out of the business of marketing to children; it must further our other public health goals; and must protect tobacco farmers and their communities.

Today, Senators John Chafee, Bob Graham, and Tom Harkin are introducing the first bipartisan bill that meets these principles, and I strongly support this effort. The evidence is clearer than ever that strong and sweeping legislation will save lives. If Congress acts, we can cut teen smoking by almost half over the next five years. If Congress acts, we can stop almost three million children from taking that first puff. If Congress acts, we can prevent almost one million premature deaths.

You and I know that in any legislation this important there will be many issues to work out, even among allies. But I am confident that we will resolve any budget or spending issues. After all, this thirty-year struggle is not about money. It is not about the size of the prize we can extract from the tobacco industry. It is about fulfilling our responsibility to our children--our responsibility as parents, as a government, and as a country. The attorneys general have shown great courage and foresight in helping us get this far. Today I urge you to join me in taking the next, important step toward a healthier, stronger America in the 21st century.