

Dingell on the 'Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act'

Washington, D.C. –Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), the Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, delivered the following statement on the House floor today in support of H.R. 1108, the “Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act.” This legislation would give the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority to regulate tobacco products.

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Contact: Jodi Seth or Brin Frazier, 202-225-5735

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Mr. Speaker, I want to place the legislation we are about to consider in its proper historical context.

Fifty-one years ago, in 1957, the Surgeon General first stated that tobacco smoking was linked to cancer.

Forty-three
years ago, in 1965, tobacco products were for the first time required to carry labels warning of the health hazards to consumers who used them.

Fourteen years ago, the chief executives of the tobacco companies were summoned to appear before the Committee on Energy and Commerce to answer questions about their knowledge of the dangers to human health caused by tobacco, and their reluctance or refusal to disclose what they knew.

Ten years ago, the tobacco companies entered into a master settlement with the attorneys general of the States, under which they would pay out billions to address the costs of smoking, among other purposes.

Today, the House will consider H.R. 1108, the "Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act." This landmark legislation will, for the first time, grant the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco products.

It is hard to believe that 51 years after we first became aware of the harmful effects of smoking — and three years after a United Nations tobacco control treaty was enacted — the U.S. government has been unable to take the steps necessary to stem the tide of smoking. With this legislation, we can change that.

Cigarette smoking accounts for about one in five deaths annually, or about 435,000 deaths each year. Each day more than 4,000 young Americans try a cigarette for the first time, and each day 1,000 become addicted to tobacco. One in every three of them will die prematurely.

With this legislation, we will place sharp and sorely needed limits on access to tobacco products and on tobacco advertising and marketing.

Public health organizations have fought for this legislation for 20 years, and I want to commend in particular the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the American Lung Association, American Heart Association, and the American Cancer Society. Our colleagues, in particular, Representatives Waxman, Davis, and Pallone deserve great credit for their diligence and persistence.

Passage of H.R. 1108 will stand as an historic achievement. I urge all of my colleagues, in the strongest terms, to vote for the health of America's children.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515