AACR Opposes Bill to Exempt Cigars From FDA Regulation

AACR

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) formally issued letters to all members of the House of Representatives and the Senate urging them to oppose recently introduced legislation that would exempt many cigars from regulation.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) currently regulates cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and roll-your-own cigarette tobacco, and has signaled that it intends to exercise its authority over cigars this year.

The “Traditional Cigar Manufacturing and Small Business Jobs Preservation Act of 2013,” H.R. 792 and S. 772, will create a new classification of cigars and exempt them from FDA oversight.

“Cigars, like cigarettes, are addictive and carcinogenic; the evidence is clear,” stated Margaret Foti, Ph.D., M.D. (h.c.), AACR chief executive officer. “The idea that we should treat cigars differently from other dangerous tobacco products would be a step backward in protecting the health of our nation.”

Cigar use has increased significantly over the past decade, posing a threat to all Americans, especially to children. The AACR’s letters express concern for the increasing prevalence of youth cigar use, and point out that under the proposed legislation cigar manufacturers could continue to add candy flavorings to cigars, increasing their appeal. Bans on candy flavoring are among the restrictions placed by the FDA on cigarettes, and the FDA is expected to extend similar restrictions to cigars this year.

The AACR’s letters also emphasize the significant economic burden tobacco use imposes on our society. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that in 2004 smoking cost the U.S. economy $193 billion in health costs, employee absenteeism and lost productivity.

“Tobacco use is implicated in nearly one in three cancer deaths and takes an enormous financial and health toll on this country,” said Roy Herbst, M.D., Ph.D., chief of medical oncology at Yale Comprehensive Cancer Center in New Haven, Conn., and chair of the AACR Tobacco and Cancer Subcommittee. “We are slowly getting the smoking rate down and reaping dividends in terms of reduced cancer incidence, but this legislation will threaten that progress.”

The AACR issued a 2010 policy statement on tobacco and cancer [1]* that called for evidence-based regulation of tobacco products by the FDA. (*Adobe Acrobat Reader [2] required)

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