

February 8, 1991

TO: Tom C. Griscom

FROM: Tom L. Ogburn, Jr.

SUBJECT: Public Issues Weekly Update February 4 - 8, 1991

Following are highlights of Public Issues activities for the week of February 4 - 8, 1991.

New Jersey -- A two phase effort has been implemented by the Public Issues Morning Team in an attempt to override Governor Florio's veto of the anti-discrimination bill. First, Smokers' Rights Group leaders will try to schedule meetings with House Speaker Joe Doria and Senate President John Lynch to encourage an override of the governor's veto. Specifically, Messrs. Doria and Lynch will be asked to quickly schedule an override vote on the House and Senate calendars. Group leaders are also contacting their members urging them to communicate with their legislators. Second, a phone bank will be initiated to approximately 12,000 activists across the state. They will be urged to call the district offices of their representative and senator, prior to the House reconvening on 2/13 and the Senate on 2/14, with an "override the veto" message. The one senator and 10 representatives who voted "against" the bill in 1990 will be the only legislators excluded. These actions have been closely coordinated with RJR State Government Relations.

Pennsylvania -- Governor Casey, in his 2/6 budget address, proposed a 30¢ per pack increase in the state cigarette tax. The new tax rate, 48¢ per pack, would be the highest in the nation. A phone bank was initiated on 2/6, half will be asked to call their legislators' district office and the other half will be asked to write their legislators at the State Capitol with a "no new taxes" message. The phone bank should be completed on Monday, 2/11.

Montana -- A bill to raise the state cigarette tax by 25¢ per pack (HB 478) has been introduced in the Montana legislature. A joint effort, involving Smoker's Rights Groups and the Volunteer Action Center, has been initiated to generate calls to state legislators' district offices and letters to their Helena office. Smokers are being asked to (1) remind their legislators that voters defeated a similar proposal by a 59 - 41 margin in the November 1990 general election and (2) urge their legislators to vote against any new tax increase.

Iowa -- Phone bank (including the Volunteer Action Center) calls continued into Iowa this week to encourage smokers to contact their state legislators and oppose Governor Branstad's proposed 10¢ per pack tax increase. Calls are being made into the districts of 45 state senators and 25 representatives.

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Minnesota -- Governor Carlson is reportedly looking for another increase in the state cigarette tax as a deficit reduction measure. He is expected to propose a 20-25¢ increase to the state's current 38¢ per pack tax rate during his budget address next week. After discussions with State Government Relations, a direct connect phone bank will be started February 11 to the Governor's office with the callers stating their opposition to this possible increase. In addition, a Priority Alert will be sent to activists across the state urging them to write and call their state legislators to express their opposition.

Volunteer Action Center -- The Action Center began operating a Tuesday/Thursday 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm shift on 2/7. The Center now operates 24 hours per week and will further expand operating hours as the program continues to grow. There are currently 136 volunteers signed-up for the program.

Choice -- Over 28,000 for the TI Youth Smoking brochure have been received through the end of January. This is in addition to the 2,500 that TI has reported receiving in response to their media advertising campaign.

League of Virginia Counties -- The League of Virginia Counties' bill to request county authority to tax cigarettes up to 6 cents per pack was rejected in legislative committee this week. The Virginia Tobacco Growers Association along with the Halifax County Board of Supervisors worked hard to defeat the bill. Last fall, RJR's Volunteer Action Center mobilized Virginia tobacco market leaders in opposition. Importantly, the Chairperson of the League has apologized to the Halifax County Board of Supervisors' Chairman and she said next year's request will exclude any tax authority for commodities, such as tobacco.

Charlotte Restaurants Voluntary designated areas. -- On Friday, February 1, The Charlotte Observer endorsed the coordinated plan of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Restaurant Association and the city government's "No Smoking Task Force" to implement a voluntary designated areas plan in Charlotte area restaurants. Media support has been considered valuable to successful plan implementation. However, The Charlotte Observer's likelihood of support had been questioned based on it's previous anti-tobacco and anti-business positions. A Copy of the editorial is enclosed.

Greensboro Restaurant Voluntary Policy Smoking referendum. -- Public Issues is working with Lorillard and the Industry to get out the vote to establish a voluntary plan in place of the Greensboro regulation requiring designated non-smoking areas in all city restaurants. The vote is Tuesday, February 26. Public Issues is providing expertise on various elements of the program as well as contacting Smokers' Rights groups, 78 Allied Forces members and RJR employees who live in Greensboro to encourage them, fellow employees, and friends to vote for the proposal.

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Arlington, TX Smoking Restrictions -- On Tuesday, February 5, The Arlington city council voted 7-2 to reject requirements for separate ventilation systems in restaurants and restrictions in work places or public places. Last weekend, Public Issues called smokers to get 15 calls into each council member, focused in priority to 3 undecided members, followed by 3 against the ordinance, and lastly the 3 considered to be in favor. The smokers' calls were mentioned by the council in its discussions.

Riverside, CA Smoking ban -- Smokers' Rights groups and local businesses are working to oppose perhaps the most oppressive smoking ban yet to be considered. On Wednesday, February 13, a city appointed "Environmental Commission" will consider and probably recommend that the city council ban smoking throughout the city, excluding only people's homes and cars.

Greenville, NC Tobacco Growers' Seminar -- Virtually all growers who attended the seminar in Greenville this week either joined the Allied Forces effort or had joined in the December, 1990 telephone recruiting effort. The Virginia Tobacco Growers Association also invited Mike Curry to be a guest speaker at its annual meeting in South Boston, Friday night, February 8. 200 growers will attend.

South Carolina LTS -- Leaders of seven smokers' rights groups from across SC attended the Leadership Training Seminar Public Issues hosted in Columbia on January 26. The 39 attenders got advanced training in media relations; current information on ETS; an update on the excise tax and smoking restriction battles underway in the SC legislature; instructions in how to impact workplace smoking restrictions; and guidance in building coalitions with other organizations. Attenders expressed much appreciation to RJR for holding the training session.

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