

Goal for World No Tobacco Day: New packaging regulations

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Sponsored by the World Health Organization and observed worldwide on May 31 each year, World No Tobacco Day highlights the health risks of tobacco use and promotes effective actions to reduce tobacco consumption. This year, World No Tobacco Day calls on countries worldwide to implement plain (standardized) packaging of tobacco products.

A key aim of World No Tobacco Day is to educate people about the work WHO undertakes in fighting the global tobacco epidemic – a large part of this work is educating the public about the manipulative tactics tobacco companies continue to use to 'dupe' people into smoking their products.

Plain packaging of tobacco products is a proven tobacco-control measure that restricts or prohibits the use of logos, colors, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard color and font style.

Led by Australia and multiple nations in Western Europe, plain packaging represents an important demand-reduction measure that reduces the attractiveness of tobacco products. It also restricts use of tobacco packaging as a form of tobacco advertising and promotion, limits misleading packaging and labelling, and increases the effectiveness of health warnings. As such, plain packaging builds upon other evidence-based measures as part of a comprehensive approach to tobacco control.

According to WHO estimates, cigarette smoking kills nearly 6 million people around the world each year. In the United States, cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke remain the largest preventable cause of death and disease and is responsible for nearly 480,000 deaths each year – a figure that exceeds the number of Americans killed by alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined.

Closer to home, World No Tobacco Day provides an opportunity for policymakers and the public to address the unfinished business of tobacco control and prevention in Nevada.

Recent data from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids documents tobacco's toll on the next generation of Nevadans. Currently, 10.3 percent of Nevada high school students smoke, nearly 1,800 Nevada kids under the age of 18 will become daily smokers this year, and an estimated 41,000 healthy kids in Nevada will die prematurely from smoking.

While Nevada has made considerable progress in curbing tobacco use, 370,000 adults in Nevada still smoke (17.0 percent of all adults) and smoking is responsible for a staggering \$1.1 billion dollars in preventable medical care costs each year.

In the current budget year, the State of Nevada will collect \$213 million in revenue from the 1998 tobacco master settlement agreement and tobacco taxes. However, Nevada will spend a miserly \$1 million on programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit this year – a figure well below the annual funding level of \$30 million recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to implement a comprehensive tobacco control program.

Let's use World No Tobacco Day as a wakeup call to the global epidemic of tobacco use and the considerable unfinished work of tobacco control that remains in Nevada.

Additional information on World No Tobacco Day www.who.int/campaigns/no-tobacco-day/2016/en/ and the Toll of Tobacco in Nevada www.tobaccofreekids.org.

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