

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks on Congressional Passage of Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

June 12, 2009

The President. Good afternoon. I just wanted to give a quick statement about the kids tobacco legislation that passed the Senate yesterday.

This bill has obviously been a long time coming. We've known for years, even decades, about the harmful, addictive, and often deadly effects of tobacco products. Each year, Americans pay nearly \$100 billion in added health care costs due to smoking. Each day, about a thousand young people under the age of 18 become regular smokers.

For over a decade, leaders of both parties have fought to prevent tobacco companies from marketing their products to children and provide the public with the information they need to understand what a dangerous habit this is. And after a decade of opposition, all of us are finally about to achieve the victory with this bill, a bill that truly defines change in Washington.

I'm proud that the House and the Senate have acted swiftly and in an overwhelmingly bipartisan fashion to pass this legislation that will protect our kids and improve our public health. Along with legislation to protect credit card owners from unfair rate hikes, homeowners from mortgage fraud and abuse, and taxpayers from wasteful defense spending, this kids tobacco bill would be the fourth piece of bipartisan legislation that I've signed into law over the last month that protects the American consumer and changes the way Washington works and who Washington works for.

So I look forward to signing it. I want to thank all the people in the House and the Senate for working so hard to pass this bill in a bipartisan way. And I want to give a special shout-out to my legislative director, Phil Schiliro. He and his team have just done an outstanding job. They've been working on this for a long time, even before they joined the administration. I'm really proud of them.

All right. Thanks, guys. Have a great weekend.

Election in Iran

Q. Mr. President, how closely are you watching the Iranian elections? How critical is it to change?

The President. We are excited to see what appears to be a robust debate taking place in Iran. And obviously, after the speech that I made in Cairo, we tried to send a clear message that we think there is the possibility of change. And ultimately, the election is for the Iranians to decide. But just as has been true in Lebanon, what can be true in Iran, as well, is that you're seeing people looking at new possibilities. And whoever ends up winning the election in Iran, the fact that there's been a robust debate, hopefully, will help advance our ability to engage them in new ways.

All right? Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs Philip M. Schiliro. The President also referred to H.R. 1256.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Smoking prevention and tobacco control legislation, Senate passage; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

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