

Mar. 7 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

than AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, murders, suicides, drugs, and fires combined. Nearly 90 percent of those smokers lit their first cigarette before they turned 18.

Today, the epidemic of teen smoking is raging throughout our Nation as, one by one, our children are lured by multimillion dollar marketing schemes designed to do exactly that. Consider this: 3,000 children start to smoke every day illegally, and 1,000 of them will die sooner because of it. This is a national tragedy that every American should be honor-bound to help prevent.

For more than 5 years we've worked to stop our children from smoking before they start, launching a nationwide campaign with the FDA to educate them about the dangers of smoking, to reduce their access to tobacco products, and to severely restrict tobacco companies from advertising to young people. But even this is not enough to fully protect our children.

To put an end to the epidemic, Congress must act. Last fall I called on Congress to put aside politics and pass comprehensive bipartisan legislation to reduce teen smoking by raising the price of cigarettes by up to a dollar and a half a pack over the next 10 years, imposing strong penalties if the tobacco industry keeps selling cigarettes to our children, affirming the

FDA's full authority to regulate tobacco, to prevent children's access to tobacco products, and to restrict tobacco ads aimed at young people, so that our children can't fall prey to the deadly threat of tobacco. Now, we learned last month that if we do this, we'll cut teen smoking by almost half over the next 5 years. That means if we act now, we have it in our power to stop 3 million children from smoking and to save a million lives as a result.

Today there are as few as 70 working days left before this Congress adjourns. On every one of those days, 1,000 adults will die from smoking. On every one of those days, 3,000 children will light their first cigarettes. On every one of those days, this Congress has the opportunity to stop it.

Will this Congress be remembered for putting politics aside and protecting our children from tobacco or for letting the public health opportunity of a lifetime pass us by? There will be no greater measure of your commitment to the health of our children or the future of our Nation.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Death of James B. McDougal

March 8, 1998

I am saddened to learn about Jim McDougal's death today. I have good memories of the years

we worked together in Arkansas, and I extend my condolences to his family.

Remarks to the American Medical Association National Leadership Conference

March 9, 1998

Thank you very much for that warm welcome. And thank you, Dr. Wootton. He was giving his talk, and I was listening, and I was thinking: I agree with all that; there's nothing left for me to say. If I knew a couple of funny stories, I could just tell them and leave and thank you for the opportunity. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Dickey, congratulations on being the president-elect. Dr. Reardon, thank you for serving on the Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality. Dr. Smoak, thank you for telling me there's nothing incompatible between a doctor named "Smoke" and a campaign