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SFW, ALA, AHA: Today's Roll Your Own Tobacco Ruling is Disappointing

Roll Your Own Cigarettes are Bad for State Health, Revenue

Madison, Wis.—February 24, 2012 – SmokeFree Wisconsin, the American Heart Association and the American Lung Association expressed their disappointment regarding Judge Colás' ruling today to allow the untaxed manufacture of cigarettes in roll your own businesses. The organizations issued the following joint statement:

"Today's ruling is extremely disappointing for those of us working hard over the past decade to keep our smoking rates down in Wisconsin. Roll your own cigarettes are harmful to our state's health and they are also decreasing state revenue. These cheap, tax-evading cigarettes are encouraging kids to start smoking and making it more difficult for adults to quit.

"Cigarettes made in a roll your own store are indistinguishable from cigarettes rolled in factories and they should be taxed equally under the law. We need our state's elected officials to take adequate measures to protect the public from the burden of tobacco and ensure all tobacco products are being taxed equally based on their intended use.

"Governor Walker's Administration's decision to enforce existing tobacco laws and regulations was the right course of action. We hope the Administration will continue to overcome these legal barriers and protect the people of Wisconsin."

Stores evading tobacco taxes on roll your own cigarettes are also hurting the state budget. Reduced tobacco tax revenues are contributing approximately \$54 million to the current projected state budget shortfall – and roll your own cigarette stores evading the cigarette tax are clearly contributing to this revenue decline.

Research shows that making cigarettes more affordable and more accessible increases smoking rates, especially in youth. By allowing roll-your-own cigarettes to continue to be sold at their cheaper price, Wisconsin risks losing the hard-won decrease in both youth and adult smoking rates the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program has attained throughout the last decade. Ultimately, the state will be the one forced to pick up the tab in the form of health care costs and lost productivity, which already total \$2.8 billion annually in Wisconsin.

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