U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Voices support for FDA's proposed "life-saving" ban on menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) joined 18 of her colleagues led by Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA) in sending a letter to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in support of FDA rules proposed earlier this year that would ban menthol in cigarettes and flavored cigars. Menthol numbs the throat and mitigates the harshness of tobacco smoke, making menthol cigarettes more appealing to youth and people beginning to smoke.

"By increasing youth smoking and making cessation more difficult, menthol cigarettes have magnified the public health harms of smoking. Between 1980 and 2018, menthol cigarettes were responsible for 10.1 million additional smokers and 378,000 premature deaths in the United States," **wrote the Senators.** "We applaud FDA for issuing these proposed rules and are pleased to see the agency using the regulatory authority that Congress gave it to reduce the death and disease caused by tobacco products."

"This careful approach is why a broad coalition, including prominent civil rights and public health groups, support FDA action to remove menthol tobacco products from the market," **the Senators continued.** "We urge you to move promptly to consider public comments, finalize the rule, and implement it so that these life-savings requirements can take effect as soon as possible."

Senators Baldwin and Markey were joined by Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Jack Reed (D-RI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Tina Smith (D-MN), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), and Alex Padilla (D-CA) in signing the letter.

The FDA has clear evidence of the harmful effects of menthol cigarettes on public health. In 2011, FDA's Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC) issued a report that concluded the "removal of menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health." Menthol cigarettes, which the tobacco industry has directly marketed to communities of color, are also more addictive and harder to quit.

A copy of the letter can be found here.

An online version of this release is available here.