

Norway court upholds ban on tobacco store displays

September 14 2012, by Julia Gronnevet

(AP)—A Norwegian court has upheld a ban on the display of tobacco products in stores, handing a defeat Friday to the Philip Morris company.

Norway, which has had a ban on cigarette and [alcohol advertising](#) since 1975, in 2010 banned even the display of tobacco products at their point of sale. Shops must keep cigarettes in unmarked cabinets or special [vending machines](#) with no visible logos. Customers wishing to buy tobacco must actively ask merchants for it.

Philip Morris sued the Norwegian state, arguing that the display ban interfered with the free flow of goods and broke with international agreements Norway is party to.

But the Oslo district court said it concluded that "the display ban is necessary and that there aren't other, less [invasive methods](#) which could give similar results."

Philip Morris has one month to decide whether to challenge the ruling in a higher court.

"We are disappointed with the court's decision and are considering our options for appeal," said Nordan Helland, spokesman for Philip Morris Norway.

[Tobacco companies](#) worldwide have long used legal avenues to challenge

government laws on cigarette taxes, smoking bans, marketing restrictions and [health warnings](#).

Most notably, Australia's highest court last month rejected a challenge by tobacco companies who argued the value of their trademarks will be destroyed if they are no longer able to display their distinctive colors, brand designs and logos on packs of cigarettes.

[Philip Morris International](#) in recent years also has filed lawsuits challenging marketing restrictions and health warnings in Uruguay and a ban on tobacco products in shops in Ireland. Those challenges are ongoing.

Anti-smoking campaigners welcomed the ruling in Oslo.

"This verdict sends a signal that it's possible to win over the mighty tobacco industry," said Karl Erik Lund, research director at the Norwegian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research, who testified as an expert witness for the state.

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