

Health groups back efforts to protect tobacco control measures under trans-pacific partnership agreement

October 8 2015

As the United States and 11 other countries conclude negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, we welcome reports that a proposal offered this week would protect the rights of participating nations to adopt public health measures to reduce tobacco use and prevent tobacco companies from using the TPP to launch legal attacks on such measures.

We commend the United States and the other countries supporting this proposal for standing up to the tobacco industry and putting public health first. We urge them to reject efforts by the tobacco industry and its allies to defeat or weaken this proposal. The final agreement must effectively protect nations' authority to combat a tobacco epidemic that will otherwise claim one billion lives worldwide this century.

This proposal is absolutely necessary because of the tobacco industry's own abusive behavior in using trade agreements to challenge tobacco control measures around the world. The tobacco industry increasingly has filed – or threatened to file – these [costly trade lawsuits](#) with the aim of defeating effective tobacco control measures or intimidating government into inaction. Australia and Uruguay are currently battling such lawsuits, and other countries have been threatened with them. The tobacco industry's behavior is a real and direct threat to public health around the world, and it must be stopped.

The tobacco industry and its political allies are fighting this proposal by claiming it would harm [tobacco farmers](#). Make no mistake: This proposal would not impact trade of tobacco leaf in any way and reportedly includes language specifically exempting tobacco leaf. It is focused on preventing [tobacco manufacturers'](#) abuse of the international trade system and addresses the actions of these manufacturers, not growers. It is shameful that [tobacco companies](#) are hiding behind tobacco growers to disguise their own wrongful and abusive behavior.

The proposed safeguard for tobacco control measures is necessary and appropriate given the conduct of the tobacco industry and the uniquely harmful nature of [tobacco products](#). Tobacco products are the only consumer products that kill when used as intended. Globally, tobacco currently kills about six million people each year and is projected to kill one billion people this century unless governments implement effective [tobacco control policies](#). There is a global consensus that nations must act to reduce tobacco use as demonstrated by an international public health treaty, the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which has been ratified by 179 nations and the European Union.

Dozens of public health groups in the U.S. and worldwide, as well as many members of Congress, have urged that tobacco control measures be protected under the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The final agreement should support nations' economic goals as well as their efforts to save lives, not the [tobacco industry's](#) efforts to sell more of its deadly and addictive products. If the agreement does so, it will be a historic victory for [public health](#) around the world.

Provided by American Heart Association

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