

CAMPAIGN for TOBACCO-FREE Kids®

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Plum and Howell Among Virginia Legislators Honored for Leadership in Protecting Kids from Tobacco

Washington, DC (July 26, 2004) – Delegate Kenneth R. “Ken” Plum and Senator Janet Howell were among the Virginia legislators honored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids for their leadership in advocating policies to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke, especially among kids. The legislators were honored at a reception sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids on July 21, 2004, during the annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislators in Salt Lake City, Utah. Other Virginia legislators honored were Senators Mary Margaret Whipple and Patsy Ticer and Delegates Harry Parrish, Mitchell Van Yahres, and Harvey Morgan. These legislators have consistently fought for strong laws to keep tobacco products out of the hands of Virginia’s kids.

“The honored legislators have been leaders in the fight against tobacco use and have made a real difference in protecting our kids from tobacco addiction,” said William V. Corr, Executive Director of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “The policies they advocate are helping to reduce smoking, save lives and save money by reducing smoking-caused health care costs.”

Tobacco use is the nation’s leading preventable cause of death, killing more than 400,000 people and costing our nation more than \$75 billion in health care bills every year. Every day, another 2,000 kids become regular smokers, one-third of whom will die prematurely as a result.

In Virginia, tobacco use kills 9,100 people and costs \$1.62 billion in health care costs each year. 21 percent of high school students currently smoke, and another 15,700 kids become regular smokers every year.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids honored legislators who have had a major impact on passing significant tobacco control legislation including:

Increased tobacco taxes: Raising the price of cigarettes through higher taxes has been proven to reduce smoking, especially among kids. Increasing cigarette taxes is a win-win-win solution for states: a health win that reduces smoking and saves lives, a fiscal win that raises much-needed revenue and a political win that is popular with the voters.

Tobacco prevention and cessation programs: These programs, which include anti-smoking advertising, school and community programs, and programs to help smokers quit, are proven to reduce smoking, save lives and save taxpayers money by reducing smoking-caused health care costs. States with effective prevention programs have cut youth smoking rates by as much as 50 percent in just a few years. Such programs have also been shown to save as much as \$3 in smoking-caused health costs for every dollar spent.

Smoke-Free workplace laws: Seven states – California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island – and numerous cities and counties across the country have passed laws requiring all indoor workplaces and public places, including restaurants and bars, to be smoke-free. These laws protect everyone’s right to breathe clean air, free from the proven health hazards of secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals and 69 known carcinogens including formaldehyde, lead, arsenic, benzene and radioactive polonium 210. It is a proven cause of serious health problems, including heart disease, lung cancer and chronic lung ailments such as bronchitis and asthma. While smoke-free laws protect health, numerous studies and the experience of smoke-free communities show that such laws do not hurt business and may even have a positive impact.

(Photos available upon request. Please contact Jennifer Friedman at 202-296-5469 or jfriedman@tobaccofreekids.org)