



HEALTH AWARENESS

Protecting Youth From Tobacco ™

(NAPSA)—With 80 percent of smokers trying their first cigarette before age 18, public health leaders are increasingly concerned about youth smoking—and they're taking action. Recent efforts have focused on stopping marketing campaigns that some say are specifically geared toward getting minority children to smoke new kinds of flavored cigarettes.

According to the American Legacy Foundation, such marketing strategies are in violation of the Master Settlement Agreement, which prohibits marketing of tobacco products to minors. The group cites various tobacco industry promotions and products that it says make the industry's intentions to target minority youth clear.

For instance, Kool Mixx is Brown & Williamson hip-hop promotion for its Kool menthol cigarettes. The company hosted Kool Mixx DJ competitions in major urban markets across the country. The same company manufactures Kool Smooth Fusions, which are menthol-flavored cigarettes with the following names: Caribbean Chill, Midnight Berry, Mocha Taboo and Mintrigue.

The American Legacy Foundation and other key public health officials including former Surgeon General David Satcher and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan maintain that Williamson adopted packaging and ads that depict young African Americans and cultural symbols of hip-hop to attract young smokers. In addition, the

group says DJ competitions are particularly popular with youth.

In 2004, attorneys general from 34 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico wrote to Brown & Williamson demanding the company end the Kool Mixx promotion. In addition, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Maryland Attorney General Joseph Curran, Jr. and New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer sued the company for violations of the Master Settlement. Brown & Williamson settled the suits and agreed to pay \$1.46 million to four organizations, with the money being devoted to youth smoking prevention initiatives. The company also agreed to restrictions on all future Kool Mixx promotions.

The American Legacy Foundation partnered with the National African American Tobacco Prevention Network, the National Center for Primary Care at the Morehouse School of Medicine, and the National Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco Prevention to fight the new marketing campaigns.

Minority youth ages 12-17 in middle and high school smoke menthols at rates much higher than white youths. Among African-American youth, nearly 75 percent who smoke, smoke menthol; among Hispanic youth, nearly 53 percent smoke menthols; and 54 percent of Asian youths smoke menthols. It's thought that drawing attention to these new marketing campaigns may help curb these disturbing numbers.

To learn more, visit the Web site www.americanlegacy.org.