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**CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO LAWMAKERS INTRODUCE MEASURES TO MAKE BASEBALL TOBACCO-FREE**

***Leading Health Experts Praise Needed Proposals That Will Protect Kids and Players***

SACRAMENTO, CA (Feb. 24, 2015) – Lawmakers in Sacramento and San Francisco today introduced statewide and citywide legislation to eliminate the use of all tobacco products – including smokeless tobacco – at all baseball venues within their jurisdictions, both to set the right example for America’s youth and for the health of the players. The legislation will send a simple and powerful message to kids as Spring Training gets underway: baseball and tobacco don’t mix.

California Assemblymember Tony Thurmond (D-Richmond) and San Francisco Supervisor Mark Farrell (District 2) are the respective authors of the measures. Public health advocates and California youth baseball players joined the lawmakers and announced their “Knock Tobacco Out of the Park” campaign to promote tobacco-free baseball and provide visibility to the issue of smokeless tobacco in baseball.

Health authorities have found that smokeless tobacco use is hazardous to health and can lead to nicotine addiction. Smokeless tobacco contains at least 28 known carcinogens and causes oral, pancreatic and esophageal cancer – as well as other serious health problems such as gum disease, tooth decay and mouth lesions.

Recent headlines have driven home the seriousness of the problem. Last June, Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn died at age 54 after a long battle with salivary gland cancer, which he attributed to his longtime use of chewing tobacco. Two months later, pitching great Curt Schilling, only 47, announced his treatment for oral cancer that he said was “without a doubt, unquestionably” caused by 30 years of chewing tobacco.

“The use of smokeless tobacco in baseball, at any level and in any location, sets a terrible example for the millions of young people who watch the game and far too often see their favorite players using snuff, dip or chew,” said Assemblymember Thurmond, the bill’s author. “We have a great opportunity to protect our players *and* stand up for kids by getting tobacco out of the game.”

Even as cigarette use continues a steady decline among youth, smokeless tobacco use has remained troublingly steady. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2013, 14.7 percent of high school boys (and 8.8 percent of all high school students) reported current use of smokeless tobacco products. Each year, about 535,000 kids age 12-17 use smokeless tobacco for the first time.

The statewide Tobacco-Free Baseball Act will apply to baseball games at all levels, including the major and minor leagues and organized leagues for youth or adults. It will cover the players, the fans, and anyone in the venue during a baseball game or related activity.

“Smokeless tobacco has no place in baseball. It is harmful to the players who use it and to kids who may imitate those players and end up addicted to this dangerous substance,” said Supervisor Farrell. “The ordinance I am offering today will make San Francisco the first city in the nation to make baseball completely tobacco-free and will make clear that we make the health of our youth a priority.”

Farrell’s local proposal aims to eliminate the use of smokeless and all other tobacco products at all baseball venues and city athletic fields within the city of San Francisco.

“Our national pastime should be about promoting a healthy and active lifestyle, not a deadly and addictive product,” said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “It is time – finally – to take tobacco out of baseball completely for kids, the players and the future. Today’s actions in California will help achieve our goal of the first tobacco-free generation. Players who dip or chew are providing the tobacco industry with free marketing, and that’s not something anyone needs. ”

Smokeless tobacco companies spent about $450 million on marketing in 2011 (the most recent year available), which is more than three times the amount they spent in 1998.

For years, leading health organizations have called for an end to smokeless tobacco in baseball. A number of groups mounted a major campaign in 2010-2011 that made some significant strides – including securing a prohibition on players carrying tobacco tins in their uniforms and using smokeless tobacco during TV interviews. But these restrictions did not eliminate smokeless tobacco use at ballparks.

“We are not just talking about a harmless habit or something that all ballplayers do,” said Dr. Donald Lyman, former Chief of the Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Control at the California Department of Health Services, which houses the state's premier Tobacco Control Program. “We’re talking about the use of a deadly and destructive product that – in the eyes of impressionable young men and women – can become inextricably linked with baseball. This bill would unquestionably help to protect the public health.”

The Knock Tobacco Out of the Park campaign will also soon be inviting people across America to visit its website, [tobaccofreebaseball.org](http://www.tobaccofreebaseball.org), to create their own personalized baseball cards identifying themselves as members of the new “Tobacco-Free All Star Team.” All of the cards shared on social media using the hashtag #TobaccoFreeBaseball will be collected in a real-time gallery on the campaign website and later delivered to Major League Baseball (MLB) and the MLB Players Association.

More information on the Knock Tobacco Out of the Park campaign can be found at [tobaccofreebaseball.org](http://tobaccofreebaseball.org). The website includes tools that allow fans and other members of the public to send messages to MLB and the Players Association telling them to get tobacco out of baseball. Baseball fans in California and in San Francisco can contact their elected officials and urge them to support the measures introduced today to make baseball tobacco-free.

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