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California Cancer Advocates Call on Assemblymember Jim Cooper to Reconsider Breaking Promise to Refuse Tobacco Money

Assemblymember Jim Cooper is First California Candidate to Reverse Position on Accepting Campaign Contributions from Tobacco Companies after Agreeing Not to in 2014

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – May 9, 2018 – The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is calling on Assemblymember Jim Cooper to reconsider his decision to start pocketing campaign contributions from tobacco companies.

When pursuing his first run for state office in 2014, Cooper accepted a challenge from ACS CAN to publicly forgo campaign contributions from tobacco companies. But, on March 14, 2018, he appeared to have a change of heart according to the Secretary of State's website, which reports a $4,400 contribution he received from Philip Morris.

After being contacted by ACS CAN, Cooper confirmed he decided to reverse course and start accepting donations from tobacco companies. Cooper is the first candidate to rescind his commitment not to accept tobacco contributions in the four-year history of the "Snuff Tobacco Money Out of California Politics" campaign.

"We are profoundly disappointed with this decision," said ACS CAN Senior Government Relations Director Tim Gibbs. "It is unconscionable that after nearly four years in office, a candidate would break a campaign promise not to accept contributions from one of the most deplorable industries on the planet. Worldwide, tobacco killed 100 million people in the 20th century and if current trends hold will kill a billion people in the 21st century."

In 2006, Philip Morris along with other tobacco companies were found guilty of racketeering in federal court. In her ruling, U.S. District Court Judge Gladys Kesslar said over the course of more than 50 years, the defendants lied, misrepresented, and deceived the American public. Last year as part of that settlement, the tobacco industry had to pay for corrective advertisements in TV and newspapers in major markets throughout the country.

In California alone, the tobacco companies have spent nearly $200 million over the last decade and a half on lobbying and campaign contributions to block policies that would reduce tobacco use. In addition, the tobacco industry spends nearly $600 million on marketing every year in California to addict new customers—primarily children—and then spends millions of dollars to make sure no policies can pass that would reduce the number of smokers in California.

Beginning in July of 2014, in an effort to expose the influence of Big Tobacco at the Capitol, ACS CAN asked candidates to reject the deception, pain and suffering that funds campaign contributions from

tobacco companies. Since then, ACS CAN has been tracking all campaign contributions from the tobacco companies and their subsidiaries to candidates for legislative and statewide offices—sharing the results on www.notobaccomoney.org.

So far in the 2018 election cycle, 18 candidates for statewide office and more than 50 candidates for legislative office have accepted our challenge to forgo campaign contributions from tobacco companies.

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit www.acscan.org.

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