



February 10, 2005

To: **Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
Christine Kaufman, Chair**
From: Cliff Christian, Director of Governmental Affairs
Subject: Support for the Adoption of funding under Initiative 146

Good morning:

The American Heart Association, one of the principal sponsors of Initiative 146, would ask this committee to adopt an appropriations equal to the wishes of the large majority of the Montana voters who, in spite of opposition, voted overwhelmingly to pass I-146 in every single legislative district in Montana.

Tobacco prevention and education is a daunting task here in Montana as well as nationwide. First of all, the tobacco companies spend between \$30 million and \$40 million each year in Montana enticing our citizens to use tobacco (they must as they lose about 1400 Montanans per year to death caused from tobacco use). Secondly, because of its addictive nature, tobacco users become hooked and find quitting the addiction, without some assistance, almost impossible.

According to the Center for Disease control, we in Montana are still subsidizing the tobacco companies by paying almost \$216 million state tax dollars to pay for the tobacco related health care costs of those who cannot. If you add the annual \$30 million in tobacco company payments because of Montana's Master Settlement Agreement, and another \$30 million per year due to the advertising dollars turning in communities and say, *liberally* another \$30 million for supplies, employees, employee taxes, property taxes

and capital improvements, the total only comes to \$90 million annually (this estimate is purposefully and woefully high). Even if, somehow, an argument could be made that the tobacco companies pay the tobacco taxes (they don't smokers do) it would add only \$40 million annually. Thus, we the Montana taxpayers (both smokers and non-smokers) are annually subsidizing the tobacco companies by at least \$86 million dollars we pay for costs associated with Medicaid health costs due to tobacco. This says nothing about the increases in premiums for health insurance and other products costing all Montanans more because of this addiction.

The appropriation for the tobacco prevention and education programs found under the Department of health and Human Services must be sufficient to allow a comprehensive program that addresses smoking so broadly (advertising, education, prevention and cessation) that the public begins to understand the kind of devastation caused by this drug and our youth in large numbers roundly condemn this product as something to use to be the Marlboro Man, or Kool or a Virginia Slim.

Heart Disease is the number one killer of Montanans – both women and men. Tobacco use prevention is the number one preventable cause of heart disease in Montana. Please adopt an appropriation equal to or greater than the minimum CDC standards for tobacco prevention and education in Montana. The savings in terms of lives and tax dollars will be enormous.

Thank you.