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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

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stronger
As a representative of a tobacco-producing state, you are undoubtedly aware of recent news accounts indicating that the Food and Drug Administration is considering the regulation of cigarettes and other tobacco products. From all indications, the Agency is looking to Congress for guidance on this issue.

In view of this, I wanted to make certain that you are aware of an amendment to H.R. 6 to be offered by Mr. Durbin which may serve to provide the FDA with the signal it is looking for to move forward with this initiative. This amendment would include language that states "the nicotine in tobacco is an addictive substance."

While this language may seem innocuous, there is a hidden danger. "Findings" do not carry the force of law; however, findings can serve to clarify congressional intent. I do not wish to offer the FDA any encouragement to regulate tobacco products. Such action could prove devastating to the economy of tobacco-producing states.

A second amendment by Mr. Durbin that seeks to precisely define the term "drug and violence prevention" could be interpreted to place tobacco in the same category as illegal drugs. No one disputes the need to prevent underage smoking, and few would suggest that schools should not have programs to discourage tobacco and alcohol use among young people. However, to place tobacco in the same category as crack cocaine trivializes the need to educate children about the dangers of illegal drugs.

In each case, the House Education and Labor Committee discussed these issues. Agreements were reached that addressed these concerns and continued to encourage schools to develop strong drug and violence prevention programs -- programs that will make young people aware of the potential risks associated with the use of tobacco and the use of alcohol.

I hope that you will join me in opposing these amendments and contacting Rep. Ford and Kildee asking them to retain the original committee language.

Sincerely,

Scotty Baesler

Scotty Baesler
Member of Congress

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