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July 15, 2014

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
SD-122 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable William "Thad" Cochran  
Vice-Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
SD-122 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Vice Chairman Cochran:

We support the provision included in the Subcommittee's bill that directs the Secretary of Defense to eliminate price discounting for tobacco products sold in commissaries and exchanges. This language improves upon the existing Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction that requires tobacco to be priced no lower than 5 percent below the most competitive commercial price in the community. The provision to eliminate any price discount for these products will help improve the health of active duty service members and their families, improve readiness and save health care costs. In recent years, military leaders have recognized the toll that tobacco use takes on military readiness and health care costs and the current practice of discounting tobacco products is simply not consistent with the need to reduce tobacco use.

Price has a significant impact on the number of people who start using tobacco products and encourages current tobacco users to quit. Numerous economic studies have indicated that price impacts both adult and underage smoking. In fact, research shows that every ten percent increase in the real price of cigarettes will reduce prevalence of adult smoking by approximately one to two percent and reduce teen smoking by about six to seven percent.

Eliminating price discounting of tobacco products by the military is critical given the disproportionately high rates of tobacco use in the military. While in recent decades, tobacco use has declined among service members, it remains higher among people serving in the military than in the civilian population. According to DoD data, in 2011 smoking rates were 16.7 percent for Air Force personnel, 24.4 percent for Navy personnel, 26.7 percent for Army personnel, and 30.8 percent for Marines, compared to 19 percent of adults in the general population at that time. Members of the armed services also have higher rates of smokeless tobacco use. In 2011, 8.7 percent of Air Force, 10.7 percent of Navy, 13.7 percent of Army, and 21.3 percent of Marine personnel used smokeless tobacco, compared to only 3.2 percent among the general

population. Particularly troubling is the fact that between 36 percent and 40 percent of current military service members who smoke started after they joined the military. This is a very different timeframe than in the civilian population where 90 percent of smokers start at the age of 18 or younger.

The DoD has come a long way since the days when it provided free cigarettes to service members. The Navy in particular has taken steps to reduce tobacco use. It has eliminated the sale of tobacco products in commissaries, ended price discounts for products sold in base exchanges, and made free FDA-approved Nicotine Replacement Therapy products available to all Navy and Marine personnel. But clearly more needs to be done to address the high rates of tobacco use in the military and to reduce the more than \$1.6 billion DoD spends each year on tobacco-related medical care, increased hospitalization, and lost days of work.

As noted above, military resale outlets are currently required by DoD Instruction to set prices at no lower than 5 percent below the most competitive commercial price in the local community. However, a study published in April, 2014 indicates that exchanges are not following this Instruction and that tobacco can be purchased at military stores at substantially lower prices than found in civilian stores. The Subcommittee's provision makes clear that all of the armed services should end price discounting, as the Navy has already done, and enforce the implementation of this policy.

We fully support the provision in the Subcommittee's bill and applaud this effort to reduce tobacco use in the military.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American Lung Association  
American Heart Association  
American Public Health Association  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids