

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Senator Cardin writes periodic columns for Maryland publications. The following column about legislation that will allow the FDA to regulate tobacco may be of interest to your readers. Please contact Susan Sullam at [susan\\_sullam@cardin.senate.gov](mailto:susan_sullam@cardin.senate.gov) if you have any questions.**

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***PRECEDE: Senator Cardin is a member of five Senate committees: Foreign Relations, Judiciary, Environment and Public Works, Budget, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship. His web site is: [cardin.senate.gov](http://cardin.senate.gov). He also can be found at [YouTube.com/SenatorCardin](http://YouTube.com/SenatorCardin)***

## CONGRESS TAKES IMPORTANT STEP TO REGULATE TOBACCO PRODUCTS

By U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin

After more than a decade, Congress has taken the important step of empowering the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate tobacco products, including the power to remove harmful ingredients from tobacco products and to stop false claims made by the tobacco industry regarding the addictive nature of nicotine.

As a co-sponsor of the *Family, Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act*, H.R. 1256, I believe that this is one of the most important public health steps we can take to improve the health of Americans and to try and prevent a new generation of nicotine addicts. Today, more than 400,000 Americans and 6,800 Marylanders die each year from tobacco use. For every Marylander who dies from smoking, approximately 20 more suffer serious tobacco-caused health problems.

Contrary to some mischaracterizations about the bill, this legislation does not outlaw tobacco, but it gives the FDA the power to help addicted smokers overcome their addiction and to make the product less toxic for smokers who are unable or unwilling to stop. This bill is long overdue and represents a responsible approach to dealing with the smoking addiction in this country.

It is estimated that more than 40 million Americans are currently addicted to tobacco. The tobacco industry spends more than \$13 billion a year to promote its products. Much of that money is spent in ways designed to tempt children to start smoking, before they are mature enough to appreciate the enormity of the health risk.

At a recent press conference on the bill, I was shocked at the number of tobacco products targeted to young smokers. I saw dissolvable tobacco that looked like candy and packs of cigarettes with bright colors that were meant to attract young girls. In Maryland, more than one in seven high school students smoke cigarettes, and each year, 22,000 Maryland children try cigarettes for the first time. Of these, 6,600 become addicted to cigarettes each year.

Too many Americans have suffered the consequences of their addition to tobacco. Too many families have watched as relatives have died from lung cancer or other diseases associated with tobacco. It's time to stop the marketing of tobacco that is intended to create a new generation of smokers.

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