



CITIZENS' COMMISSION
TO PROTECT THE TRUTH

For Immediate Release

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for Disease Control**

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1983-1989

**Directors of the Centers for
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2002-2009

**FORMER HEADS OF HEW, HHS, SURGEONS GENERAL AND
CDC DEMAND MENTHOL FLAVORING BE REMOVED
FROM CIGARETTES IN A LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA**

May 26, 2011 – Former Secretaries of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and of Health and Human Services, U.S. Surgeons General, and Directors of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, known as The Citizens' Commission to Protect the Truth, today sent [a letter to President Obama](#) demanding that menthol be removed from cigarettes.

The group charged that the tobacco industry has pursued a “cynical strategy” using menthol flavoring to get African Americans and teenagers to smoke cigarettes.

According to findings from the [March 2011 report](#) of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee:

- More than 80 percent of adolescent African American smokers use menthol cigarettes;
- More than half of adolescent Hispanic American smokers use menthol cigarettes;
- More than half of Asian American middle-school smokers use menthol cigarettes; and
- Almost half of 12- to 17-year old smokers use menthol cigarettes.

The letter stated that it is “imperative that big tobacco interests not be allowed to delay FDA action in furtherance of their economic interests and to the detriment of public health.” The letter further went on to say that “the tobacco industry’s continued delay tactic of dubious challenges to sound science allows them to continue their profitable and shameless exploitation of children and minorities.”

Studies published this month in the *American Journal of Public Health* show that not only could a ban on menthol prevent up to 600,000 smoking-related premature deaths by 2050, but that a ban is supported by more than half of Americans (56 percent), and three quarters of African Americans, who were found to be disproportionately affected.

A recent National Cancer Institute study revealed that if menthol cigarettes were no longer sold, 39 percent of all menthol smokers, including nearly half of all African American menthol smokers, said they would quit using tobacco completely rather than switch brands.



“Removing menthol from cigarettes may be the most important thing that can happen for the health of minorities in decades. It is imperative for the FDA to act swiftly to ban menthol flavoring in cigarettes. It will not only be a big boost to the health of our minorities, but to young Americans who are also exploited by the pushers of menthol cigarettes,” noted Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Chairman of the Citizens’ Commission to Protect the Truth and the former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare who began the nation’s first anti-smoking campaign in 1978. Califano is also the founder and chairman of The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.

The letter concluded with the group urging the President to “encourage the FDA to take action to ban menthol flavoring from cigarettes in order to protect the public health of our nation’s teens and adults.”

The Citizens’ Commission to Protect the Truth, a group of former U.S. Secretaries of Health, Education, and Welfare and of Health and Human Services, former U.S. Surgeons General, and former Directors of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Republican and Democrat, was formed in March 2004 to prevent youth from smoking. Among its efforts, the Commission shines a spotlight on the continued need to fund **truth**®, the only independent national youth counter- marketing campaign with demonstrated results in keeping children and teens from smoking. For more information on the Commission, visit its web site at www.ProtectTheTruth.org.

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