



NEWS RELEASE

Contra Costa County
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CONTRA COSTA SUPERVISORS TO URGE FDA TO BAN MENTHOL CIGARETTES

WHAT: Contra Costa County to discuss passing a resolution that urges the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to ban menthol flavoring in tobacco products

WHO: Board Chair John Gioia, Members of the Contra Costa County Tobacco Prevention Coalition, American Lung Association

WHEN: **Tuesday, October 26, 2010**
9:30 a.m.

WHERE: Contra Costa Board of Supervisors, Board Chambers
651 Pine Street, Martinez, CA

MARTINEZ, Calif., On October 26, 2010, the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors will discuss passing a resolution urging the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ban menthol in all tobacco products.

“The FDA has already banned other candy flavors from cigarettes because they were considered starter products for youth. Menthol is clearly a ‘candy’ flavor”, said John Gioia, Chair of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors. “In addition, an overwhelming majority of menthol smokers are from communities of color, which are specifically targeted by the tobacco industry in its advertising and marketing campaigns.”

Tobacco Industry documents reveal a clear pattern of designing flavored tobacco products to target youth and communities of color. Of all 12-17 year olds who smoke tobacco, 44% use menthol cigarettes. Among African American youth smokers, 79% prefer the menthol products and 51% of Asian American and Latino youth prefer menthol. Menthol cigarettes are more common among newer, younger smokers. Current data shows that over 80% of African American smokers use menthol cigarettes, compared with 23% of White smokers.

The FDA was granted the authority to regulate tobacco products in 2009 under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act signed by President Obama. The law banned “candy” flavors from all cigarettes but excluded menthol flavoring. Supervisor Gioia is introducing this resolution at the request of the Contra Costa Tobacco Prevention Coalition to encourage the FDA to ban menthol products as it considers changes to the laws regarding menthol, with a decision expected early next year.

“Tobacco companies have a vested interest in keeping menthol tobacco products legal because the flavoring helps addict children”, said Supervisor Gioia. “Contra Costa County has an opportunity to be a leader by passing this resolution to encourage the FDA to ban menthol cigarettes.”

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