



**Summary of Testimony before the Health,  
Education, Labor and Pensions Committee  
United States Senate**

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**Ending Tobacco Use in the United States --  
Our Past, Present and Future**

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**For Release upon Delivery**

**2:30 pm**

**May 15, 2014**

Fifty years ago, half of the men and a third of the women in this country smoked cigarettes. Tobacco companies advertised everywhere and smoking was common in almost all public places, including hospitals. Today, however, the landscape is different. Tobacco prevention and control measures have saved an estimated eight million lives over the last half-century.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the success of the tobacco-control movement constitutes one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Despite enormous progress, the tobacco epidemic still rages on—in every community and in every corner of our country. The Surgeon General has concluded that combusted – or burned - tobacco products, such as cigarettes, cigars, and pipes, are overwhelmingly responsible for the burden of death and disease from tobacco use in the United States.<sup>2</sup> And new, novel tobacco products pose challenges to research, surveillance, health policy, and regulation because they vary so widely in form, mode of use, contents, designs and emissions, potential health effects, and marketing claims.<sup>2</sup>

To accelerate declines in tobacco use, the 2014 Surgeon General’s Report emphasizes the effectiveness of comprehensive approaches to tobacco control that apply a mix of educational, clinical, regulatory, economic, and social strategies to: prevent initiation of tobacco among youth and young adults; promote quitting among adults and youth; eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke, and identify and eliminate tobacco-related disparities among population groups. While these evidence-based strategies are currently underutilized, CDC along with other federal agencies, states and communities are taking steps to change that dynamic. Real progress in tobacco control will require commitment and effort across all sectors of our society including the business sector.

If we end the tobacco-use epidemic, we can prevent one out of three cancer deaths in this country and save our economy nearly \$300 billion a year in medical costs and economic losses.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Holford TR, Meza R, Warner KE, Meernik C, Jeon J, Moolgavkar SH, Levy DT. Tobacco control and the reduction in smoking-related premature deaths in the United States, 1964–2012. *JAMA: the Journal of the American Medical Association* 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Consequences of Smoking-50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta (GA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US).

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014). Let's Make the Next Generation Tobacco-Free: Your Guide to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health. Available at: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/>. Accessed May 5, 2014.