

Resolution to Reduce Tobacco Use in Kentucky

Adopted by the delegates of the 59th Annual Assembly of the Kentucky Council of Churches in Bardstown, KY on October 20, 2006

WHEREAS: A major tenet of every faith is spiritual well-being and the promotion of good physical and mental health, and tobacco use undermines both;

WHEREAS: Every year, more than 7,800 Kentuckians die horrible but preventable deaths caused by tobacco addiction, due to both smoking and other forms of tobacco use, and thousands more suffer from tobacco-caused disability and disease;

WHEREAS: One in every three high-school aged youth in Kentucky is a current smoker (the highest youth smoking rate in the country); and another 12,500 Kentucky children become addicted smokers every year; in addition 14% of Kentucky high school students use spit or smokeless tobacco, more than twice the national rate;

WHEREAS: Exposure to secondhand smoke in workplaces and homes kills and harms thousands of Kentuckians every year;

WHEREAS: Kentucky's health care expenditures caused by tobacco use total over \$1.3 billion each year, including more than \$440 million in annual tobacco-caused expenditures by the State Medicaid program;

WHEREAS: Only 3% of the \$100 million Kentucky receives from the tobacco settlement each year is used for prevention, and that is only one-fifth the amount recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC).

WHEREAS: The public health community has worked with agricultural leaders for more than a decade to secure and maintain significant funding to assist tobacco farmers with diversification (more than 50% of the Kentucky tobacco settlement revenue), to support our rural communities and family farms, and to promote and continue our rich farming heritage;

BE IT RESOLVED: The Kentucky Council of Churches endorses comprehensive and effective public policy measures recommended by the CDC and other experts to prevent and reduce smoking and other tobacco use in the state particularly among children and pregnant women, including:

- Increasing Kentucky's tobacco tax rates to at least the nationwide state average to reduce teen smoking and help fund Kentucky's health care needs;
- Prohibiting smoking in all workplaces, including restaurants and bars;
- Funding Kentucky's tobacco prevention and cessation programs at least at the minimum level of \$25 million per year as suggested by the CDC;
- Ensuring no state government preemption of local efforts to prevent and reduce tobacco use or its harms.