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as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Use as intended and die

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Imagine selling a product that kills the consumer if they use it as intended. Then imagine convincing our government to allow it to remain legal. It is a one of a kind product, legal and if used appropriately, lethal. It is cigarettes. We have other products available to us that would kill us if we abused them. But cigarettes alone are the only product with government sanctioning to kill. Does it seem a bit absurd something this dangerous is legal? The validity of the medical data is beyond debate, unless you are a tobacco company executive testifying before Congress; then the data is highly questionable.

So, how does something this dangerous remain on the market? Simple. Money and power. The politicians understand this. The tobacco lobbyists understand this. And the tobacco lobbyists know exactly what to do with their money and their power. They spend it on the politicians, who have an insatiable need for money and power themselves. An ideal marriage, if not for the inconvenient reality of the millions of people killed every year.

What more proof must Congress have for them to muster the ethic to do what is right? They simply do not have the collective will to eliminate cigarettes, especially the congressional leaders from "tobacco" states. I do understand they are elected to represent their constituents. But, is it appropriate they support a product that kills? Isn't there a greater responsibility and ethic we expect of our leaders?

What are our political leaders doing? They are accepting staggering sums of money and favors from tobacco while bartering votes with one another, pursuing their primary goal - remain in congress and get more power. Sadly, they are willing to sacrifice millions of lives each year rather than risk losing their power and status. These same politicians spout sanctimonious

diatribes on the ills of each other's party, each other's candidates, on anything that gives them television time. They are always running for office and they always have their hand out, knowing what they must do in return. And so they file into the halls of Congress and do what they were paid to do.

Are these men and women the men and women our founding fathers foresaw leading our country? They tell us convincingly they can accept favors from tobacco and other lobbyists, without it influencing their vote. Is it reasonable for us to believe them? Would a judge be allowed to rule on a case in which he or she had a financial interest?

If the tobacco executives can make their outrageous claims to congressional panels without consequences, what could they possibly have to fear from Congress? Nothing. Congress is not their problem. Their problem is they have perfected the addictive powers of cigarettes, but at the expense of killing the user. If you kill the user, you kill the market. Worldwide, over 3 million smokers die each year. How can tobacco companies maintain profitability if they are killing 8,000 consumers every day? They have only one option. They must recruit 8,000 new smokers everyday to maintain their profits.

This creates another problem for the tobacco companies because studies confirm that few smokers start as adults, leaving children and teenagers as the only market available to fill the killing fields with new bodies. So, they must constantly recruit new child and teenage smokers. Moreover, increasing regulation on tobacco advertising in the United States resulted in declining sales in our country, requiring some tobacco companies to look to the third world for their new child smokers. In Albania, Philip Morris pays high school girls to

hand out free packs of cigarettes. Although this practice is illegal in many countries, including Albania, it magically seems to continue. Needing to entice more teenagers, British American Tobacco sells cigarettes in the South Pacific laced with sugar and honey, making them more palatable for children. According to the British Medical Journal, "The corporate plan of Philip Morris Taiwan repeatedly stressed the need to place business priority on young and new smokers." The World Health Organization claims "tobacco companies are targeting the half billion young people in the Asia Pacific region by linking smoking to glamorous and attractive lifestyles."

Apparently, the tobacco executives we have seen testifying before Congress were not informed their companies were targeting children and teenagers rather than adults. These executives seem to know precious little about their product and what their companies are doing. They claim they have not manipulated cigarettes to make them more addictive. They are unconvinced cigarettes cause the ills attributed to them. And they are oblivious that to maintain profitability they must recruit 8,000 new smokers a day. How can they fail to recognize their job is to recruit children and teenagers to the killing fields? How many are we willing to sacrifice?

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