

ACP

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*

September 17, 2008

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), representing 126,000 internal medicine physicians and medical students, I am writing to (1) thank you for introducing and working to secure passage of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, S. 625, and (2) urge you to seek to remove the exemption of mentholated cigarettes from the ban on tobacco flavorings prior to a vote on final passage of the bill.

The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act would amend the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act to allow the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate tobacco products through disclosure, annual registration, inspection, recordkeeping and user fee requirements. It would also ban fruit and candy-flavored cigarettes. However, the bill would exempt mentholated cigarettes from the ban. ACP is concerned about the exemption of mentholated cigarettes in this bill given the disproportionate impact that mentholated cigarettes have on the African-American community. Approximately eighty percent of African-American smokers smoke mentholated cigarettes, and some studies suggest that menthol in cigarettes increases the body's retention of carcinogenic substances. Research shows that, although African-American menthol smokers smoke fewer cigarettes per day than their White counterparts, they suffer disproportionately worse outcomes. Given this, ACP urges you to work to remove the exemption of mentholated cigarettes when S. 625 is brought before the full Senate for a vote.

The House passed the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, H.R. 1108, by a veto-proof margin of 326-102. Again, on behalf of ACP, I thank you for all your past efforts to move S. 625 through the legislative process. I urge your continued support of the bill with the removal of the menthol exemption.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey P. Harris, MD, FACP
President