

BroadcastMed | Expert Comments on Surgeon General Report About Smoking

SPEAKER 1: Cigarette smoke affects every organ system in the body. So the more we learn about this, the more organ systems that we know are involved. And for this report, one example will be colon cancer. We've known for a long time that cigarette smokers have a larger number of polyps of the colon, which are the precursor to colon cancer. So it's not a big surprise that now the committee is concluding that cigarette smoking is associated with colon cancer.

SPEAKER 2: OK.

SPEAKER 1: We lose over 480,000 Americans every single year to tobacco-caused diseases. That's equivalent to three fully-loaded 747s crashing daily, 365 days a year, with no survivors. Were that to happen tomorrow, every 747 will be grounded within a few days. Our government would not tolerate it. We would not tolerate it. So my question is why do we tolerate the carnage of cigarettes?

We have to remember that cigarettes are a modern phenomenon. The year of the Camel was 1913. So just last year, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Camel, which was the first modern cigarette.

My great grandparents didn't have to contend with cigarettes. So why do we continue to contend with them just because they're a legal product? They're a legal product by a historic accident. Were they introduced today as a product, no one would approve them, ever. They would never be approved as a product at all.

Food and Drug Administration has the authority to regulate cigarettes and have had it for a few years now. But they haven't done much of anything with that. So the Food and Drug Administration needs to regulate tobacco products for the serious medical problem that they present, which is they kill over 2/3 of the customers that use them.

And so we need to, first of all, have regulation of the product itself. But more importantly, we have to have the political will to do something about this. Congress has the power to do it. And they just have never been willing to step up to it because of the influence of the tobacco companies [INAUDIBLE]

What's missing from this [INAUDIBLE] report is a clarion call to action with five or six very specific things that we know work and we can do tomorrow if we had the political will.