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COALITION BACKS PLAN TO PROVIDE ALL TOBACCO USERS WITH ACCESS TO CESSATION TREATMENT

“Call for ACTION” seeks access for all Americans by 2020

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18, 2008 – Nearly two dozen of the nation’s business, labor, insurance, government and health care leaders – including three former Secretaries of Health and Human Services and two former Surgeons General – today endorsed a bold plan to provide every American with access to comprehensive tobacco cessation treatment services by the year 2020.

The *National Working Group for ACTION* (Access to Cessation Treatment for Tobacco In Our Nation) unveiled the plan in a document entitled a “Call for ACTION.”

“Ending tobacco addiction is crucial to our nation’s health and its economic well-being,” said John M. Clymer, president of Partnership for Prevention, a nonprofit organization that coordinated the working group’s efforts. “But while 70 percent of the nation’s smokers say they want to quit, only 30 percent of them are using proven cessation techniques, and only 1 in 50 employers currently provide workers with any cessation treatment coverage.”

The plan unveiled today calls for immediate, systemic and lasting action in key areas identified in recent reports issued by the CDC, the Institute of Medicine, and the U.S. Public Health Service. Those reports cited three vital areas where the country should take action to improve access to comprehensive treatment:

- **Insurance Coverage:** Provide comprehensive first-dollar coverage for tobacco use treatment under all public and private insurance.
- **Quitlines:** Increase funding for state quitline infrastructure and promotion and provide incentives for quality improvement efforts.
- **Healthcare systems:** Institutionalize the routine treatment of tobacco use in all out-patient and in-patient service delivery.

A detailed listing of all the recommendations in these three areas is available online at <http://www.actiontoquit.org>.

“There are many steps to a comprehensive program: first of all, providers need to remind patients that it’s important to stop smoking and insurers must pay for comprehensive cessation benefits,” said Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which helped sponsor the working group and endorsed the plan.

The call was also endorsed by former HHS Secretaries Tommy Thompson, Donna Shalala and Richard Schweiker, as well as former Surgeons General Richard H. Carmona and Joycelyn Elders. In addition to Gerberding, current government officials endorsing the call included Judy Monroe, Indiana’s state health commissioner and president of the Association of State and

Territorial Health Officials; Nathaniel Cobb, tobacco control chair at the Indian Health Service; and John Niederhuber, director of the National Cancer Institute

Private-sector endorsements came from the National Business Group on Health, the Automotive Industry Action Group, the Service Employees International Union, United Health Group, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas, ClearWay of Minnesota, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Canyon Ranch Institute, Partnership for Prevention, the American Legacy Foundation, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the North American Quitline Consortium, and the Smoking Cessation Leadership Center.

The working group's efforts were sponsored by the American Legacy Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Partnership for Prevention, Pfizer, Smoking Cessation Leadership Center, and UnitedHealth Group.

REPORTERS AND EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE: The www.actiontoquit.com website also includes videotaped interviews with a number of leaders who endorsed the "Call to ACTION," including Gerberding, Carmona, Monroe, former Texas Health Commissioner Eduardo Sanchez, American Heart Association President Cass Wheeler, and United Health Group Executive Vice President Reed Tuckson.

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