

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Florida CHAIN Awarded Grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Improve Health Access Programs by Boosting Taxes on Florida Cigarettes**

**Ft. Lauderdale, February 6, 2007** – Florida CHAIN (Community Health Action Information Network) announced today it has received a \$75,000 grant to support its Alliance for a Healthy Florida campaign, a statewide effort to expand health access programs through increased tax revenues from tobacco products. The initiative is one of 21 projects supported by *Tobacco Policy Change: A Collaboration for Healthier Communities and States*, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

“This grant will help focus attention on raising the tobacco tax as a way to improve the health of Floridians. We seek to decrease smoking among children and adults while proactively finding a solution to the problem of the uninsured,” said Lisa Margulis, executive director of Florida CHAIN.

The Alliance for a Healthy Florida campaign also includes a number of partnering organizations such as the American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Florida Academy of Family Physicians, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Florida ACORN, National Council of Negro Women and Community Catalyst.

“The Florida Academy of Family Physicians, with its 4,000 members, is proud to be a part of this effort. We must do everything in our power to deter individuals from smoking and the cost of cigarettes is certainly a proven deterrent,” said Tad Fisher, executive vice president.

While 40 years of tobacco control efforts have produced significant reductions in smoking, there continues to be a compelling need for advocacy and education efforts focused on the dangers of tobacco use and exposure. Each year tobacco use kills 440,000 Americans, and nearly 40,000 nonsmokers in this country die from lung cancer and heart disease due to secondhand smoke exposure.

Exorbitant health care costs, compounded by the number of uninsured individuals in Florida, is a disaster in the making and call for immediate action. Annual health care costs in Florida directly caused by smoking are \$6.32 billion. Additionally, about 3.1 million Floridians, close to 20% of the state population, are uninsured costing taxpayers \$7 billion in 2006, according to the Florida Medical Association.

Florida can begin to address these problems through an increased tobacco tax. A major tax increase on cigarettes will rapidly and significantly reduce the number of smokers.

Studies show that a 10 % price increase for cigarettes reduces tobacco products usage by 7% among youth and 4% among adults.

“It is vital that people who live and work in places hit hardest by tobacco have a say in making their communities healthier places to work and raise a family,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., RWJF president and CEO. “The work of Florida CHAIN reflects a focused, community-based approach targeted in areas that suffer disproportionately high rates of tobacco use, exposure to secondhand smoke and related diseases.”

Today’s announcement marks the third round of three one-year grant awards, which vary in range from \$75,000 to \$150,000. Including today’s grant announcements, *Tobacco Policy Change: A Collaborative for Healthier Communities and States* is providing up to \$12 million in support of tobacco prevention and cessation policy initiatives, especially in those areas where tobacco continues to have its most devastating consequences.

For more information on this program and others supported by RWJF, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

Florida CHAIN is a statewide network organization dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Floridians, especially disenfranchised constituencies. Florida CHAIN works by linking and building the capacity of communities for national, state, regional and local advocacy. For more information, visit [www.floridachain.org](http://www.floridachain.org).