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NEWS RELEASE



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Attorney General Joins 30 Other States in Notifying Tobacco Company, Brown & Williamson, of Intent to Sue for Violations of Master Settlement Agreement:
Concerns Focus on Targeting Youth in Kool Promotions and Advertising

(Juneau) – Reflecting Governor Frank H. Murkowski’s long-stated priority to turn up the heat against cigarette use, especially by children, Alaska Attorney General Gregg Renkes joined 30 other state attorneys general in notifying tobacco manufacturer Brown & Williamson of possible violations of the Master Settlement Agreement, the landmark 1998 settlement of state claims against tobacco companies. The attorneys general informed the company, by letter dated May 7, 2004, that Brown & Williamson’s “Kool Mixx” promotional campaign appeared to violate prohibitions in the MSA against targeting youth in tobacco advertisements, the placement of tobacco products in the media, and the use of brand names on merchandise.

“A few weeks ago I spoke to a group of teenagers in Juneau and told them they have to make a choice about whether to use tobacco and I told them to ‘kick butts,’” said the Governor. “There is no choice when it comes to tobacco, especially where our kids are concerned. We’re onboard with enforcing the settlement and it is my hope that through this support the tobacco company in question will do the right thing.”

According to a B&W press release, Kool Mixx 2004 was designed to celebrate “urban Hip Hop culture.” It features events in 10 states as well as retail and consumer promotions, including special edition thematic cigarette packs, an interactive Kool Mixx CD/CD ROM, and a MixxStick compact radio.

The attorneys general allege that aspects of the Kool Mix campaign unlawfully target youths by using Hip Hop themes on cigarette packaging and in retail displays and by featuring young DJs and dancers on the CD/CD ROM. The cigarettes, displays and radios are being sold in drug stores, convenience stores, and gas stations, places where teenagers frequently shop. The CD/CD ROMS have appeared in magazines with high youth readership, such as *Vibe* and *Rolling Stone*.

“I am concerned Brown & Williamson’s recent promotional campaign, with its emphasis on Hip Hop themes and Kool merchandising and products that appeal to young people, violates the MSA, including the prohibition on advertising to youths,” said Renkes. “It is this type of targeted advertising that we need to challenge because it undermines our efforts within Alaska to reduce access of tobacco products to our children.”

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The attorneys general also informed Brown and Williamson that the contents of the Kool Mixx CD/CD ROM, which includes music recordings, interviews and videos of DJs, dance performances, and video games, violates the MSA prohibition against tobacco products in the media. In addition, they stated that the CD/CD ROM and the Kool Mixx Stick Radio violate the prohibition against brand name merchandise.

“We expect Brown & Williamson to abide by the terms of the agreement,” said Renkes. “The letter expresses the attorneys general willingness to discuss the issues with Brown & Williamson. How we proceed from here depends largely on how this company responds to the letter of notice,” said Renkes.

For more information, contact Assistant Attorney General Cynthia Drinkwater, at 907-269-5200.

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