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**American Lung Association’s “State of Tobacco Control 2014” Report Highlights
Urgent Need for Mississippi to Renew Its Commitment to Eliminate Tobacco-
Caused Death and Disease**

Fifty years after the first Surgeon General’s report, Mississippi is still failing to stop tobacco use, the leading cause of preventable death in Mississippi

MISSISSIPPI (January 22, 2014) – Mississippi made no progress this past year in reducing tobacco-caused death and disease, according to the American Lung Association’s [“State of Tobacco Control 2014”](#) report released today. Fifty years since the first Surgeon General’s report on smoking and health was issued on January 11, 1964, and less than a week after the new Surgeon General’s report providing the latest research was released, the Lung Association’s new report issues an urgent call to action to policymakers in Mississippi and across the country. Policymakers must reverse their present course and commit to eliminating tobacco-caused death and disease.

“Despite strides in reducing smoking rates in America by half in the last 50 years, tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death and illness in the U.S., including lung cancer, the number one cancer killer of both men and women in America,” said Jennifer Cofer, Interim Chief Executive Officer of the American Lung Association, *Plains-Gulf Region*. “The Surgeon General’s 2014 report is the clarion call that our nation needs to renew its commitment and not let another 50 years of inaction occur,” Cofer urged.

The Lung Association’s [“State of Tobacco Control 2014,”](#) its 12th annual report, tracks yearly progress on key tobacco control policies at the federal and state level, assigning grades based on whether laws are adequately protecting citizens from the enormous toll tobacco use takes on lives and the economy. The 2014 report highlights the 50th anniversary of the historic 1964 Surgeon General’s report that linked smoking to lung cancer and other diseases for the first time.

In advance of the 50th anniversary, the American Lung Association and its partners called for action by all levels of government to achieve three bold goals:

- Reduce smoking rates, currently at about 18 percent, to less than 10 percent within 10 years;
- Protect all Americans from secondhand smoke within five years; and
- Ultimately eliminate the death and disease caused by tobacco use.

“If these goals are to be realized and lives are to be saved, Mississippi must enact these lifesaving policies,” said Cofer. “In short, our nation cannot afford the health or financial consequences of failing to act.”

Mississippi received the following grades for State of Tobacco 2014:

Tobacco Prevention and Control Program Funding: F
Smokefree Air: F
Cigarette Tax: F
Cessation Coverage: F

“Mississippi has the unfortunate distinction of failing to make progress in the fight against tobacco use in 2013, and protect its citizens from tobacco-caused diseases like lung cancer, the leading cancer killer of both men and women in Mississippi. Meanwhile Big Tobacco continued to rob our health and wealth with clever new tactics to lure new youth smokers,” said Cofer.

Tobacco causes an estimated 4,761 deaths in Mississippi annually and costs the state’s economy \$2,345,142,000 in healthcare costs and lost productivity, a tremendous burden that our state can ill afford.

For Mississippi, 2013 was another missed opportunity to put in place proven policies to reduce tobacco use and save lives, including smokefree workplace laws, higher tobacco taxes and tobacco prevention and quit smoking programs.

“Smokefree workplace laws, high tobacco taxes, funding tobacco prevention and quit smoking programs at recommended levels and providing insurance coverage for quit smoking treatments have been proven to reduce tobacco use. All that is missing in Mississippi is the political will from our elected officials,” said Cofer.

“Leaders in Jackson must step up to provide smokers with the support they need to quit and adequately fund prevention programs that help keep our kids off tobacco,” said Cofer.

Meanwhile, the tobacco industry continued its ruthless pursuit of addicting new users and keeping current users from quitting in 2013. This included efforts at the federal and state levels to exempt their products from meaningful public health protections.

The three largest cigarette manufacturers—Altria, Reynolds American, and Lorillard—continued their aggressive expansion into tobacco products other than cigarettes in 2013. As cigarette use continues to gradually decline, these companies continue to maintain their stranglehold on America’s youth and reap profits from smokeless tobacco, cigars and now e-cigarettes.

“I urge everyone in The Magnolia State to join the American Lung Association in Mississippi and renew their commitment to preventing another 50 years of tobacco caused death and disease,” said Cofer.

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About the American Lung Association in Mississippi

Now in its second century, the American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. With your generous support, the American Lung Association is “Fighting for Air” through research, education and advocacy. For more information about the American Lung Association or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872) or visit www.lungusa.org.