



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 10, 2007

Contact: Julia Cartwright
202-454-5596

**MPAA RATINGS POLICY FAILS TO ADDRESS YOUTH EXPOSURE
TO SMOKING IN THE MOVIES**
Statement from the American Legacy Foundation®

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Today's announcement from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) to "consider smoking" when rating movies falls short and fails to implement the meaningful recommendations set forth by numerous organizations in the nation's public health community.

"This announcement is wholly inadequate and will cost countless lives," said Legacy's President and CEO Cheryl Heaton, Dr. P.H. "Since more than 80 percent of smokers start before turning 18, youth exposure to smoking in youth rated movies is a vital concern for our nation's health."

Parent, youth and public health groups, including Legacy, the American Medical Association and AMA Alliance and American Academy of Pediatrics have been urging the MPAA to rate any new movie with smoking R to reduce youth exposure to film smoking.

Research published earlier this week in the journal *Pediatrics* found that U.S. films deliver billions of smoking impressions to 10-14 year olds in the U.S. – the ages at which youth are likely to begin experimenting with cigarettes. The study – the first to directly examine youth's exposure to movie smoking—supports previous findings that youth-rated movies deliver proportionally more smoking to adolescents because they are less likely to see R-rated movies.

Several key factual statements in MPAA's letter to state attorneys general are at odds with independent research on this subject: According to April 2007 data from the University of California-San Francisco Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education, 72 percent of all U.S. produced live action films that grossed at least \$500,000 from 2004 – 2006 depicted smoking. Also, between 2004 and 2006, only 42 percent of movies that depicted smoking were already R rated, not the 75 percent claimed by the MPAA.

-more-

MPAA FAILS TO ADDRESS SMOKING IN THE MOVIES/add one

The MPAA quotes the 2006 Monitoring the Future Study and states that “the percent of smoking during a monthly period was down about 60%, 50% and 40% in grades eight, ten and twelve respectively.” What it doesn’t say is that the comparisons were to youth smoking rates in the mid-1990s when they reached a peak. MPAA’s letter also fails to mention that the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stated four times in the last five years that high levels of smoking in movies are responsible for the fact that youth smoking remains as high as it is and that there was no decline in daily youth smoking rates between 2005 and 2006.

The MPAA makes a general claim that “parents are very clear to us that they – not the industry and certainly not the government – should determine what is appropriate viewing for their kids.” To the contrary, a February survey from Mississippi State University and the American Medical Association Alliance indicates that 81 percent of adults in the United States agree adolescents are more likely to smoke if they watch actors smoke in movies, and 70 percent support a new R-rating for any movies with on-screen tobacco imagery, unless the film clearly demonstrates the dangers of smoking. The Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control is an annual scientific poll of public attitudes about tobacco control policies.

*The American Legacy Foundation® is dedicated to building a world where young people reject tobacco and anyone can quit. Located in Washington, D.C., the foundation develops programs that address the health effects of tobacco use, especially among vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by the toll of tobacco, through grants, technical assistance and training, partnerships, youth activism, and counter-marketing and grassroots marketing campaigns. The foundation’s programs include **truth**®, a national youth smoking prevention campaign that has been cited as contributing to significant declines in youth smoking; **EX**SM, an innovative public health program designed to speak to smokers in their own language and change the way they approach quitting; research initiatives exploring the causes, consequences and approaches to reducing tobacco use; and a nationally-renowned program of outreach to priority populations. The American Legacy Foundation was created as a result of the November 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) reached between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories and the tobacco industry. Visit www.americanlegacy.org.*

###