

# Press Coverage of MSA allocation outside of tobacco control

**Katherine Clegg Smith, Melanie Wakefield & Mark Nichter**

This research is funded by the National Cancer Institute's State & Community Tobacco  
Control Interventions Research Initiative by grant #  
CA86273-01

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# Objectives of this study

- To identify newsworthy non-tobacco control areas for which MSA funds have been claimed
- To examine how non-tobacco control spending is being presented through the US press
- To suggest how successful claims on MSA funds might be made

# The Master Settlement Agreement

- **November 1998: 46 states sign the Master Settlement Agreement with the major tobacco companies**
- **The MSA should provide \$206 billion over the 25 years following the agreement**
- **The opportunities presented to tobacco control from the MSA are limited b/c there is no provision as to how the funds should be spent**
- **CDC guidelines for MSA allocation only being met by 3 states (July 02)**

# Methods

**Qualitative textual analysis of 94 articles from U.S. daily newspapers over 1 year (10/00-9/01)**

**Focus on identifying reported areas of spending and rhetorical devices used to frame spending decisions**

# Results

**There are a wide range of programs to which funds are being applied**

**State employee pay rises**

**School nurses**

**Children's health insurance**

**Laptop computers for legislators**

**Illicit drug prevention**

## Results II

**Justification of spending proposals/decisions is central to many of the articles**

**Three Justification themes:**

- **Allocate funds to 'The Needy'**
- **Spend funds on state development**
- **Apply funds to weather a particular crisis**

## Results III

### **MSA funds should be spent on the needy**

- Identification of a particular vulnerable subgroup e.g. children
- Decisions framed as 'mother's milk': undeniable good
- Vivid illustrations of need esp. using personal stories
- Direct claims on MSA funds w/ reference to total MSA funds

*'Is our state government going to cut health care for the poor while it's rolling in tobacco cash?' (Paducah Sun, February 3, 2001)*

*'Children's services in this state, like many of the children dependent on them, are hurting badly.' (Birmingham News, Al, 8/20/01)*



***'Drug costs sometimes force middle-income seniors to make hard choices between whether to buy food or fill a prescription.'* (Today's Sunbeam, NJ 08/11/01)**

*'The administration shouldn't delay any of the national tobacco settlement money from getting to the cash-strapped agencies it was intended for to pay for badly needed children's programs.'* (Birmingham News, AL 08/20/2001).

*'The money would come from the state's \$11.3 billion share of the nationwide tobacco settlement.'* (Bucks County Courier Times, PA 01/30/2001)

## Results IV

### **Funds should be spent on state development**

- Money framed as 'state funds'
- Opportunity for the state prioritized
- State well being is of central concern

*'...\$6 million for the first phase of a \$150 million water system .....to provide infrastructure needed to support economic development. It will enhance public health, provide better firefighting ability and help ease the burden of federal and state monitoring requirements.'* (Orangeburg Times and Democrat, SC 08/11/2001)

# Results V

## **Funds should be applied to weathering a crisis**

- Appeals on behalf of both specific demands and general budgetary shortfalls
- The need resulting from a particular crisis essentially renders the allocation a 'non-issue'
- Appropriate to forgo normal spending procedures if necessary
- Funds portrayed as 'added extra' – not really losing anything

*'The uranium thing is such an obvious human problem. It's the type of problem that tends to draw a quicker response than some of the habitat-related issues.'* (Greenville News, SC 08/11/2001)

*'The final plan to spend the state's nearly \$11.3 billion windfall from the tobacco industry will include elements of proposals from both chambers.'* (Bucks County Courier Times, PA 02/04/2001)

- *'The plan would require the board of the Health and Wellness Trust Funds, which oversees 25% of the \$4.6 billion the state will receive from cigarette makers, to provide money to programs to help seniors buy prescription drugs.'* (Winston-Salem Journal, NC 04/28/2001)
- *'Cities and counties are lining up for a chunk of South Carolina's lucrative settlement with the tobacco industry. The municipalities have submitted 214 applications as they seek to build new roads, fiber optic lines and water and sewage treatment plants in economically depressed areas.'* (Herald-Journal, SC 10/18/01)

## Results VI

### **The concept of ‘Tobacco Money’**

- Associating the industry with positive contributions and/or state and community welfare
- Underpins the public relations efforts of the industry – corporate citizenship
- Undermines the portrayal of the industry causing untold suffering
- Distraction from why the money was collected in the first place

# Discussion

- The issue of allocation has moved beyond whether or not to spend funds on tobacco control
- Arguments rest on the idea that funds both can and should be shared
- Press coverage affirms the legitimacy of alternative spending areas
- MSA funds are being reconceptualized as 'Tobacco Funds' – serves the industry