



Contact: Nicole Dueffert

202-454-5589

ndueffert@truthinitiative.org

Statement of Robin Koval, CEO & President, Truth Initiative

On the Deceptive Marketing of Natural American Spirit Cigarettes

We commend Breathe DC for filing a lawsuit in the DC Superior Court to hold Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company accountable for their deceptive marketing of Natural American Spirit cigarettes. We know that people incorrectly and dangerously believe that smoking American Spirit cigarettes reduce the harm associated with smoking because they mistakenly perceive ‘additive-free’ or ‘organic’ cigarettes to be a safer choice. But, inhaling burnt tobacco is equally and seriously harmful, whether it’s organic or not.

This lawsuit come on the heels of a warning letter issued by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company in August 2015 determining that their use of “Natural” and “Additive Free” on their product labeling constitutes a reduced harm claim. These claims are prohibited under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 without FDA approval – which has never been given. There has been no public action by the FDA on its warning letter since it was issued. FDA urgently needs to enforce their order to ensure that Santa Fe Tobacco can no longer mislead consumers about the safety of their product.

Research conducted by Truth Initiative’s Schroeder Institute for Tobacco Research and Policy Studies found that descriptors and other aspects of American Spirit cigarette packs lead 50-60 percent of U.S. adults to incorrectly believe that American Spirit cigarettes are less harmful than a comparison cigarette pack.

Study participants compared the harm of a Marlboro Red cigarette pack versus American Spirit packs with the descriptors “Made with Organic Tobacco,” “100% Additive-Free,” or “100% U.S. Grown Tobacco.” Participants also compared the same American Spirit packs without the descriptors to the Marlboro Red pack, and compared American Spirit packs to each other, with and without the descriptors.

Even without the descriptors, 35-59 percent of participants perceived American Spirit packs as less harmful than Marlboro Red, suggesting that other American Spirit pack design factors such as color,

brand name, and logo could affect perceptions of harm. The findings were the same regardless of whether participants were non-smokers, current smokers, or former smokers.

About Truth Initiative

Truth Initiative is a national public health organization that is inspiring tobacco-free lives and building a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**[®] public education campaign, our rigorous and scientific research and policy studies, and our innovative community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco. The Washington, D.C.-based organization, formerly known as Legacy, was established and funded through the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories and the tobacco industry. To learn more about our work speaking, seeking and spreading the truth about tobacco, visit truthinitiative.org.