

S U S A N

C O M B S

TEXAS COMPTROLLER *of* PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

WWW.WINDOW.STATE.TX.US



June 6, 2008

(Addressee information)

Address

City, State Zip+4

Dear Cigarette and Tobacco Retailer:

According to recent statistics from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, nearly 36,000 Texas children started smoking last year — and by doing so, they set themselves up to ultimately become one of the 24,000 Texans killed annually by tobacco-related illnesses. It's a tragedy, and not only in human terms. Our economy suffers too. Annual health care costs in Texas directly caused by smoking are over \$5.8 billion with another \$6.4 billion in smoking-related productivity losses.

You can help prevent our Texas children from adding to these grim statistics. While we cannot physically monitor every tobacco sale to ensure the purchaser is 18 or over, as a retailer, you are uniquely positioned to help drastically reduce teen smoking by making sure your store doesn't sell tobacco to minors. Most of you work diligently to ensure your store clerks check young customers for valid identification, and your hard work is greatly appreciated.

It is illegal to sell any tobacco product to anyone under 18. Penalties for non-compliance include Class C misdemeanor criminal charges with fines of up to \$500, civil penalties from \$500 to \$1,000 and revocation of the cigarette/tobacco retailer permit. A tobacco retailer whose permit is revoked must wait six months before applying for a new permit.

Many Texas health programs are supported by federal dollars that are tied to the rate of sales of cigarettes and other tobacco products to teenagers. If Texas doesn't maintain a low sales rate, we stand to lose millions of dollars used for our state's local drug and alcohol treatment programs.

I am asking you to help me in this effort by ensuring your store doesn't sell tobacco to kids.

Sincerely,

Susan Combs