



## Department of Justice

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Dear City and County Attorneys,

I am writing to ask for your help and cooperation in enforcing Iowa's new tobacco laws.

Targeting some of the proceeds of the recent landmark settlement with the big tobacco companies that our office was able to secure, the State has enacted a comprehensive initiative aimed at reducing underage tobacco use. The new program is balanced and community-based. The new laws are even-handed with graduated civil fines and community service for underage tobacco users, criminal fines for clerks who sell tobacco to minors, and fines and graduated permit sanctions imposed on retailers who make tobacco available to persons under eighteen years of age.

As you know, the state of Iowa's Alcoholic Beverages Division (ABD) is providing enforcement funding which includes reimbursement for compliance checks of Iowa's approximately 6000 cigarette permit holders. Each retail permit holder will be checked twice before the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2001. More than 150 city police and county sheriff departments have already contracted with ABD to enforce our new tobacco laws.

Regular and consistent enforcement will be the key to the success of our state's effort. Even though the State's new tobacco laws include some new provisions and penalties; the basic laws prohibiting minors from using tobacco and retailers from selling tobacco to minors have been on the books for many years. For a variety of reasons, these laws have not been enforced to the fullest extent.

That is why your effort will be so important. It is time we work together to enforce the law. I believe when we do so we will change the culture of tobacco use in Iowa. Currently, a thousand kids take up tobacco every month in Iowa. Five thousand Iowans die each year from tobacco related disease and illness, the vast majority of whom began smoking before the age of 18. Enforcing our tobacco laws now, will save lives in the future.