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**PRESS RELEASE**

**“Today, I have filed a multi-million dollar lawsuit in the Chancery Court of Pulaski County, Arkansas against the major tobacco companies, their public relations firm and lobbyists, and their industry research propaganda corporation. The gravamen of our complaint is to send a message to big tobacco – leave our kids alone.**

**Tragically, 3000 children begin smoking each day. In Arkansas, these numbers are even more tragic since Arkansas has a higher than national average smoking population. According to the 1995 Arkansas Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 13.5% of our children smoke every single day. 6.4% of Arkansas kids smoked their first cigarette when they were eight years old or younger.**

**The lawsuit filed today alleges that the companies and their agents have engaged in a decade-long conspiracy to defraud the citizens of Arkansas and have purposely targeted our susceptible youth by use of their image-based advertising and marketing.**

**We are asking the Court to find that these acts violated Arkansas’ Deceptive Trade Practices Act and to issue broad injunctive relief to stop the industry from preying upon our kids.**

**We intend to force the industry to tell the truth about the addictiveness of nicotine and the health risks of tobacco use and to force the industry to make public its own knowledge and studies on the dangerous health risks of tobacco. In addition, we are asking the Court to order the companies to reimburse the State for the millions it has spent to care for those who have become sick or died from tobacco related illness.**

**Make no mistake about it -- this is a war to protect Arkansas' kids. We will not be fighting this battle alone. Today, Arkansas joins 24 other states who have filed suit. We look forward to working with those states and to achieving our common goals of protecting our kids."**