

Testimony to Subcommittee on Human Services; Thursday, February 21, 2013; 1:00 pm in HR F

Co-Chair Bates, Co-Chair Nathanson, members of the committee...

Good afternoon. I am **Eric Jones of West Linn**. I am here today to speak to you about the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (TMSA), the Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP), and my wife of 15 years – whom I lost nearly 10 years ago to tobacco-related lung and liver cancer.

Patty was and is my hero. She started smoking at age 18 when smoking was being promoted by everyone, even by some doctors. She smoked for 34 years. In 1998, my wife was diagnosed with advanced laryngeal cancer and became a laryngectomee. She lost her vocal cords and had to breathe through a stoma in her neck. She taught herself esophageal speech and went on to *speak* to over 4,000 Oregon school children about the risks of tobacco use. She would tell the kids that she spent \$34,000 on cigarettes to get a hole in her neck, asking if she got her money's worth. Classrooms were silent, the teachers amazed, and kids threw away packs of cigarettes as they left the session.

Patty and I worked through the TPEP program for nearly 3 years. She spoke to children and adults when we attended fairs and festivals for the Clackamas County portion of the program. It used simple, but *effective* ways to get both children's and adults' attention, including tar jars, counting the number of pennies representing those lost each day to tobacco-related illnesses, and a Wheel of Fortune wheel with which participants were asked a tobacco-related question and could win a prize. I watched as these techniques, along with my wife's esophageal speaking, captured the attendees' attention. We saw firsthand the impact the TPEP

program had in getting children to promise to never use tobacco and smoke.

Since the 1998 TMSA, the billion dollars that Oregon has received have *never* been used for its intended purpose. Not one penny of the settlement funds has gone towards tobacco prevention! When the TPEP program was cut – starting in 2003, a decline in smoking reversed itself. The purpose of the TMSA was to help Oregon recoup health care dollar losses from the tobacco company's fraud and to save Oregon lives. This is still a vital need in our state today. No program is ever perfect, but Patty and I saw *firsthand* the value, *significant* impact, and positive public response to the TPEP program. I urge you in my wife's memory to do what she worked so hard to do before the cancer returned and stole her from me and my family. Please save Oregonians' lives – now and long into the future by investing TMSA dollars in the TPEP program!

Thank you for your time today.

[I have a DVD with my wife's story to share with each committee member]