

Attorney General's Office Negotiates Assurance of Voluntary Compliance

On December 21, 2005, Attorney General Bill Lockyer announced an agreement with ConocoPhillips under which the oil firm will adopt new procedures and contractual requirements to reduce sales of tobacco products to minors at 10,463 company-owned and franchise retail outlets across the country, including 1,211 in California.

The agreement was signed by Lockyer, and the Attorneys General of 39 other states. It applies to outlets that operate under the Conoco, Phillips 66 and 76 brand names in 31 of the signing states, including California.

The ConocoPhillips "Assurance of Voluntary Compliance" (AVC) is the eighth such agreement produced by an ongoing, multi-state enforcement effort which Lockyer has helped lead. Previous agreements cover, in the signing states, all Wal-Mart, Walgreens, Rite Aid and 7-Eleven stores, and all gas stations and convenience stores operating under the Exxon, Mobil, BP, ARCO and Amoco brand names.

In addition to the multi-state AVCs, Lockyer and Los Angeles City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo in December 2004 reached a similar, court-approved settlement with Safeway, Inc. That agreement covers 538 Safeway, Vons, Pavilions and Pak N' Save stores in California. The settlement resolved a lawsuit brought by Lockyer and Delgadillo that alleged Safeway violated state laws designed to prevent tobacco sales to minors. Combined, the AVCs and Safeway settlement cover roughly 55,000 retail outlets across the nation.

Launched in 2000, the multi-state enforcement effort by a group of 32 Attorneys General focuses on retailers with poor records of selling tobacco products to minors. State laws prohibit such sales. The enforcement program's goal is to secure the companies' agreement to take specific corrective actions. The agreements incorporate "best practices" to reduce sales to minors, developed by the Attorneys General in consultation with researchers, and state and federal tobacco control officials.