



**For Immediate Release
October 23, 2007**

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MADIGAN, 41 OTHER ATTORNEYS GENERAL ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT WITH KROGER TO CURB TOBACCO SALES TO MINORS

Chicago - Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that teenagers under the age of 18 should find it more difficult to purchase cigarettes from the nation's largest grocery chain due to a settlement that Madigan's office and 41 other Attorneys General have reached with the Kroger Company.

Under this settlement agreement, Kroger Company will implement new procedures to reduce sales of cigarettes to minors in more than 2,400 stores that the company operates nationwide under two dozen different store names. Illinois is home to approximately 60 Kroger-operated stores under the names of Food 4 Less, Hilander and Kroger.

“We know that studies indicate that 80 percent of adult smokers begin this deadly habit before reaching the legal smoking age of 18. By limiting a child's access to cigarettes, we can help protect the health of the next generation,” Madigan said. “The hard work of this multistate group of Attorneys General has resulted in agreements with a growing number of retailers, and I am pleased that we have been able to reach an agreement with such a large retailer as the Kroger Company.”

Today's agreement with Kroger is the eleventh settlement reached by the multistate enforcement effort covering more than 80,000 retail outlets across the nation. Previous agreements include all 7-Eleven, CVS, Wal-Mart, Walgreens and Rite Aid stores and all gasoline stations and convenience stores operating as Conoco, Phillips 66, 76, Exxon, Mobil, BP, Amoco, ARCO and Chevron within the participating states and Guam.

This enforcement effort seeks to secure national retailers = agreement to take specific corrective actions to prevent sales of tobacco to minors. The agreements incorporate A best practices @ to reduce sales to minors, developed by the Attorneys General in consultation with researchers and state and federal tobacco control officials.

Under the agreement, all Kroger stores are required to:

- Check the identification of any person purchasing tobacco products who appears to be under the age of 27, and accept only valid government-issued photo IDs as proof of age;

- Hire an independent entity to conduct random compliance checks of Kroger stores;
- Limit tobacco signage to brand names, logos and pricing and ensure that all tobacco advertising inside the store is confined to the area where tobacco products are sold; and
- Train employees on state and local laws and company policies regarding tobacco sales to minors, including explaining the health-related reasons for laws that restrict youth access to tobacco.

Kroger also agreed to pay \$325,000 for costs incurred by the states in the investigation.

Madigan said the Attorneys General have long recognized that youth access to tobacco products ranks among the most serious public health problems. Research indicates that every day in the United States more than 2,000 people under the age of 18 start smoking and that one-third of those persons ultimately will die from a tobacco-related disease. Young people are particularly susceptible to the hazards of tobacco, often showing signs of addiction after smoking only a few cigarettes.

In addition to Illinois, the participating Attorneys General represent Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming and Guam.

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