

Lobby Watch: **Second- Hand Smoke!**

☞ 'Rolling Papers' Expose TX Business Lobbies As Philip Morris Puppets

As the full House considered a bill on May 21 to crack down on children's access to tobacco products, leaked documents, which insiders call "the Rolling Papers," circulated in the Capitol lobby. The "Rolling Papers" document that Philip Morris orchestrates the tobacco shilling of the Texas Association of Business & Chambers of Commerce (TABCC) and the Texas Civil Justice League (TCJL). Philip Morris coached these trade groups to dodge issues of tobacco addiction, but to nonetheless attack Texas' crack down on tobacco products by arguing that such measures harm the state's business climate.

The most recent "rolling paper" is a May 21, 1997 letter that TABCC President Dane Harris wrote to members of the Legislature. The letter attacks HB 119, a bill that would require tobacco companies to disclose toxins, carcinogens and other product ingredients. "The tobacco issue notwithstanding, we feel this legislation would create an unnecessary burden for Texas employers," Harris wrote.

The other "Rolling Paper" is a March 27, 1996 fax on Philip Morris letter head from Jack Dillard to Ralph Wayne of the Texas Civil Justice League (which is trying to gut state liability laws affecting corporations). In a hand-written cover note, Dillard (who also is a member of the TABCC board) reveals how he coached Ralph Wayne and Dane Harris on their responses to Attorney General (A.G.) Dan Morales' tobacco lawsuit. Dillard even chides Wayne for being too emotional and eager to stump for the tobacco barons.

"As we discussed, this statement is way too strong and personal in its approach," Dillard scribbled to Wayne. "It would have to be toned down. Therefore, I'm also sending you the revised version of what I provided today to Dane, which is much less highly charged. You may want to make some of the same points but in your own words or in a different way. However, I do have one suggestion. It would certainly seem to be a fair comment for TCJL to point out that this sort of action by the A.G. is going against the grain and moving in exactly the opposite direction from the real progress that has been achieved in recent years in implementing tort reform and in limiting the lawsuit abuses promoted by big name trial lawyers."

Attached to this note, Dillard sent Wayne a copy of Harris' TABCC statement, dated the next day, which condemned Morales' suit. "An action by the state that fundamentally alters the relationship between government and a lawful industry carries risks for all of us," it says, with no mention of tobacco risks.

For a copy of the "Rolling Papers," call the phone number above.