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**GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS ANNOUNCE CALL FOR END TO
NATIONAL TOBACCO SPONSORSHIP OF RODEOS**

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Las Vegas, NV-- As thousands gathered in Las Vegas this week for the largest U.S. rodeo event of the year, activists urged the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) to end its national sponsorship contract with the U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company (USSTC).

"We are absolutely *not* calling for an end to rodeo--we're very pleased that the sport is growing so much in popularity," said Laura Norman, Secretary and Queen & Royalty Contest Chair for the Coarsegold Rodeo. "But we're concerned that sampling booths, rodeo scoreboards, banners, and ads sponsored by the tobacco industry give young audience members the message that chewing tobacco is part of being an adult rodeo fan or cowboy."

"We applaud the PRCA's efforts to promote community health through its participation in programs such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 'Eat Smart. Play Hard.' project that brings PRCA cowboys to schools to discuss healthy lifestyle choices, and the 'Tough Enough to Wear Pink' campaign is a great way to raise funds for breast cancer research," said Andrea Craig Dodge, director of the Buck Tobacco Sponsorship Project and the Regional Tobacco-Free Rodeo Project (Buck Tobacco/RTFRP) (www.bucktobacco.org). "But to truly support healthy lifestyles and help reduce cancer rates, the PRCA should reject tobacco sponsorship."

The PRCA has several other high-profile national sponsors, including Wrangler, AT&T, and Pace Picante sauce. "The PRCA clearly presents profitable sponsorship opportunities to many types of companies that are appropriate for a family-friendly sport like rodeo," said Nicole Truax Chacon, Tobacco Control Health Educator at the Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD) in Las Vegas. "It can reject tobacco sponsorship in favor of a more family-friendly sponsor."

Norman, Chacon and Dodge are collaborating with advocates around the country to circulate an open letter urging the PRCA to end its sponsorship agreement with USSTC. They are also working with the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids to obtain grassroots support for their efforts. "The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids has set up a website at www.GiveTobaccoTheBoot.org that allows grassroots advocates to email the PRCA to urge them not to renew its sponsorship contract with the smokeless tobacco industry," says Dodge.

One out of ten teenage boys uses smokeless tobacco (also called spit tobacco), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smokeless tobacco can lead to oral cancer, gum disease, nicotine addiction, and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Buck Tobacco/RTFRP, a project of the Public Health Institute, works to end tobacco sponsorship of rodeos. The project is currently funded by several sources, including the American Legacy Foundation®; the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; a litigation settlement negotiated by the City and County of San Francisco and the Environmental Law Foundation; and California Proposition 99.

The Public Health Institute is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting health, well-being and quality of life for people throughout California, across the nation and around the world. As one of the largest and most comprehensive public health organizations in the nation, the Public Health Institute is at the forefront of research and innovations to improve the efficacy of public health statewide, nationally and internationally. For more information about the Public Health Institute, visit www.phi.org.

The Southern Nevada Health District: The Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD) is one of the largest local public health organizations in the United States. The health district serves over 2 million residents of Southern Nevada and is responsible for safeguarding the public health of more than 37 million visitors to Las Vegas each year. The health district offers services and regulatory supervision that impact the public every day – from the food they eat and the water they drink, to the public establishments they visit, the businesses they operate and the requirements they must meet in order to work in certain industries such as food service and child care. For more information about SNHD and its services, visit www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org. For more information on the SNHD Tobacco Control Program and their involvement with the rodeo project, visit www.getthehealthyclarkcounty.org.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids is a leader in the fight to reduce tobacco use and its devastating consequences in the United States and around the world. By changing public attitudes and public policies on tobacco, the Campaign strives to prevent kids from smoking, help smokers quit and protect everyone from secondhand smoke.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. The Foundation's *Pioneer Portfolio* supports innovative ideas and projects that may trigger important breakthroughs in health and health care. Projects in the Pioneer Portfolio are typically future-oriented and look beyond conventional thinking to explore solutions at the cutting edge of health and health care. For more than 35 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

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