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Picking up the pieces after disaster





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**Star Tribune** 

# Minnesota 1998 Topacco Settlement

In 1994, the State of Minnesota and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota (BCBS) sued the major cigarette companies for, among other things, violating Minnesota's consumer fraud laws by marketing cigarettes to youth under 18 years old and lying about the hazards of smoking. The state and BCBS sued to recover money they paid to cover the enormous health-care costs associated with the treatment of tobacco-related illnesses, incurred on behalf of Minnesotans who became smokers as a result of the industry's deceptive business and marketing tactics. The cigarette companies settled with the state in 1998 at the end of a long trial. The State of Minnesota will receive more than \$6 billion over the first 25 years and about \$200 million annually thereafter, forever. BCBS set aside its settlement winnings to fund long term health improvement for the state of Minnesota.

### What does the settlement cover?

- The settlement resulted in a court order prohibiting the cigarette companies from using youth-targeted advertising and certain other kinds of advertising, such as cartoon characters like Joe Camel, putting signs larger than 14 square feet outside of stores that sell tobacco products, using billboard ads, selling, giving away, or even using things with cigarette brand names on them (e.g. t-shirts, matchbooks, backpacks, and other items), paying for tobacco product placement on TV or in movies; and other restrictions on tobacco advertising.
- Minnesota's court case and settlement also resulted in millions of pages of previously secret, internal industry documents, the overwhelming majority of which had never been seen by anyone outside of industry insiders before, being made public. These documents are being used by tobacco prevention advocates each day to continue to focus scrutiny on the tobacco industry and its harmful business practices. <sup>5</sup>

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