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STATE OF WASHINGTON

## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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### **Governor Gregoire Announces Washington Smoking Rate Drops to 5<sup>th</sup> Lowest in Nation**

205,000 fewer adult smokers since state began Tobacco Prevention and Control Program

SEATTLE – Governor Chris Gregoire today announced that the adult smoking rate in Washington has dropped to 17.8 percent, which is the fifth lowest smoking rate in the country. Adult smoking in Washington has dropped by 21 percent since the state began its comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Control Program in 2000, far outpacing the national rate of decline.

"I am proud that Washington has become a national leader in the battle against tobacco use," said Governor Gregoire. "It has taken a lot of hard work and the consistent decline in adult smoking rates shows that the hard work is paying off. Washingtonians will live longer, healthier lives because they have quit smoking."

At a press conference today in Seattle, Secretary of Health Mary Selecky announced that the adult smoking rate in Washington declined from 22.4 percent in 1999 to 17.8 percent in 2005, moving the state up in rank from 20<sup>th</sup> to fifth place in the nation. The drop translates to about 205,000 fewer smokers in Washington – equal to filling Safeco Field four times. The decline in smoking will save the state \$1.8 billion in future health care costs.

"We're helping smokers put out their cigarettes for the last time and that means a healthier Washington," said Secretary Selecky. "Our rates are falling at a remarkable pace and our statewide cessation programs, including the Tobacco Quit Line and our work with health care providers, are making a real difference in people's lives."

The Washington Tobacco Quit Line is a key element of the state's adult tobacco prevention and control work. More than 80,000 Washington residents have called the toll-free [quit line](#) ([www.quitline.com](http://www.quitline.com)) at 1-877-270-STOP (in Spanish, 1-877-2NO-FUME) for free counseling, a

personalized quit plan, local quitting resources and free quit kits.

"There are now many more former smokers in our state than current smokers," said Dr. W. Hugh Maloney, president-elect of the Washington State Medical Association. "To build on this momentum, doctors, nurses and health care workers should identify patients who smoke and guide them to proven quitting resources like the Tobacco Quit Line."

The state has trained thousands of physicians and other health care workers on how to help their patients quit smoking and has implemented several campaigns to make those most at-risk aware of cessation resources.

While Washington has made significant headway in lowering smoking rates, there is still work to do. The tobacco industry spends more than \$184 million each year in our state to hook smokers. About 45 youth start smoking each day and about 8,000 people in our state die every year from tobacco-related diseases.

Media materials (<http://www.quitline.com/pressroom.php>) are available online.

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