PRESS RELEASE

Need for Urgent Presidential Veto Against Proposed Industry Favorable Tobacco Law

The Panamanian Public Health Society (SPSP) asks President Juan Carlos Varela to veto, as soon as possible and completely, the bill of law 136, which establishes provisions related to the content and disclosure of information about tobacco products.

We are vigilant of the decision of the executive branch, since these modifications threaten the health of citizens and favors tobacco companies, allowing them to expand sales, advertising, and even impose restrictions on health authorities in terms of the disclosure of products.

Here legislation has not benefited the interests of the population, since last minute amendments proposed by and aligned with the interests of the tobacco industry and its national and international allies were incorporated into the draft Law, creating a bill to the measure of the tobacco industry.

Panama has an exemplary anti-tobacco law since 2008, which is a model for the rest of the world and has put the image of our country in high standing, for its ability to put the protection of its citizens’ health above petty economic interests of an industry responsible for seven million premature deaths per year, including one million deaths among non-smokers exposed to tobacco smoke.

The example of Panama, which already has the second lowest prevalence of smoking in the world, represents a threat to the global interests of the big tobacco companies, such as British American Tobacco and Philip Morris International.

These two tobacco companies participated in the ad hoc commission created by the Assembly to introduce amendments to Bill 136, which were then approved in the second debate and the next day in the third debate.

If sanctioned, this will represent a very hard blow against public health and would affect the image of Panama as a small country in territorial extension that has proven to be a giant in sovereignty, against the onslaught of the powerful world tobacco industry. Mr. President, your veto will be an expression of national sovereignty.
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Because of its global significance, the Panamanian Society of Public Health (SPSP), affiliated with the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), has decided to send an appeal of solidarity to all Public Health Associations of the Americas and the world, so that a movement is made, demanding the representatives of British American Tobacco and Philip Morris in each country, to take hands-off and stop exerting economic and political pressure upon all levels of the Panamanian State.

Panamanian Public Health Society

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