

News Digest

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Congress: RJR held medical research Swaying of federal scientific studies among allegations

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawyers for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. suppressed research on the hazards of smoking — including the discovery of how to remove dangerous carbon monoxide from cigarettes — and even destroyed early evidence, according to documents that Congress released Wednesday over the industry's fierce objections.

The 150,000 pages, which tobacco companies took all the way to the Supreme Court to keep hidden, suggest that industry lawyers controlled decades of tobacco research and even attempted to sway the National Cancer Institute's nicotine investigations.

Previously released documents showed that tobacco companies knew their products were dangerous well before the surgeon general's first warnings in the 1960s. But critics say the new documents show for the first time the extent to which lawyers fought growing public suspicion by controlling what research came to light.

"This massive fraud and conspiracy left an unprecedented toll of death and disease in America," said Minnesota Attorney General Hubert Humphrey III, whose anti-tobacco lawsuit helped produce Wednesday's release of papers.

Reynolds countered that the lawyers were merely exploring every avenue to protect their clients.

They "were doing what lawyers are sup-

posed to do — preparing the company to defend itself in litigation and regulatory challenges," RJR said in a statement. "Every American citizen, whether an individual or a corporation, is entitled to obtain such advice on a privileged and confidential basis."

Rep. Thomas Bliley, R-Va., put the papers on the Internet two weeks after the tobacco companies exhausted their last appeal with the Supreme Court asserting the papers were privileged attorney-client communications.

The documents promise to add fuel to a Justice Department investigation of an alleged tobacco industry conspiracy to mislead the government.

More importantly, they bring bad publicity to the tobacco industry as it attempts to kill tough legislation in Congress that would severely restrict marketing and make it pay hundreds of billions of dollars to fight teen smoking.

Among Wednesday's revelations:

■ "Destroyed reports and letters for legal reasons," reads a note handwritten by a top RJR scientist. The company's own attorneys, doing a legal review in 1985, discovered the decade-old note, which discussed early test results of damage from Camel cigarette chemicals.

■ Scientist John Reynolds found a way to remove carbon dioxide, a key contributor

to heart disease, from cigarette smoke in the 1970s. Lawyers suppressed his discovery.

Publishing Reynolds' work "would have constituted an admission on the part of the company that carbon monoxide was in smoke," said one lawyer, and Reynolds said his bosses felt that the removal was too expensive, the document says.

■ When RJR's top scientist in the 1950s attempted to isolate one of tobacco's worst carcinogens, then-President Edward Darr responded: "Do we really need to be doing that kind of work?"

■ Tobacco companies also attempted to sway federal research. Philip Morris executive Helmut Wakeham urged lobbying an influential National Cancer Institute scientist in 1971, when a study "of considerable concern to the tobacco industry" was fighting for funding.

"If we make a strong presentation, he may downgrade the priority of this proposed test," Wakeham wrote. The work entailed some of the first research on how the addictive chemical nicotine acts when inhaled.

■ Lawyers routinely edited scientific reports "to eliminate unfortunate word choices," insisting that scientists who uncovered carcinogens always refer to them as "alleged."

■ As early as the 1950s, the "greatest fear" of the company's top lawyer "was that

"This massive fraud and conspiracy left an unprecedented toll of death and disease in America."

HUBERT HUMPHREY III
Minnesota attorney general

RJR would do something that would enable the FDA to regulate tobacco.

The Food and Drug Administration's 1994 investigation into nicotine's addictiveness — and subsequent decision to regulate the chemical as a drug — set off the latest tobacco wars. FDA evidence that cigarette makers manipulated nicotine levels helped spur 40 states to sue the industry for repayment of smokers' medical bills.

The industry last summer attempted to settle those lawsuits, offering to pay billions of dollars and fight teen smoking in return for strong legal protections. That truce fell apart this month as Congress moved forward with a much tougher bill.

Newspaper articles prompt ASUN to pass 2 bills

■ UNL is recommended to respond to sexual harassment allegations and to uphold federal statutes.

By JESSICA FARGEN
Assignment Reporter

Wednesday morning UNL students woke up to two campus newspaper articles about alleged unethical practices by two university departments.

On Wednesday night ASUN passed two bills hoping the university would take a closer look at the actions of its faculty.

In its regular meeting Wednesday ASUN recommended action in response to allegations of sexual harassment of female professors in the political science department and unethical treatment of American Indian remains by the anthropology department.

Two bills outlining courses of action for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln were drafted and brought to emergency status. Two hours later they passed.

Senate bill No. 2 encouraged UNL to take appropriate action concerning sexual harassment or racial complaints filed against individuals or departments.

Association of Students of the University of Nebraska President Sara Russell said ASUN would make information available explaining how to file a complaint. The bill also said ASUN would "promote the continued diversity and sensitivity training."

The bill was in response to a report issued last week alleging that the political science department has allowed sexual harassment against women professors to go on.

Parts of the report were printed in the Daily Nebraskan Wednesday.

Most of the debate during the meeting focused on the wording of the bill, not its intent.

Some objected to the word "training" because it could imply classes. Several senators said it could mean things such as attending cultural events.

Speaker of the Senate Matt Boyd said awareness would be a better word to use because the type of training is not specified, making the bill sound like political rhetoric.

"We have to show we can do it, not just say we want to do it," Boyd said.

Senators also responded to allegations that UNL's anthropology department has been illegally housing American Indian remains, including several bones found in a drawer with Taco Bell wrappers.

If these allegations are true, UNL is in violation of the Native American Grave Protection Act of 1990, which says all remains held by federally funded institutions were supposed to be returned to their tribes by 1995.

Senate bill No. 3 "demanded that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and all of its departments uphold all

Nebraska and federal laws, in particular those statutes which address the use and repatriation of Native American remains."

The bill, senators said, responded to an article printed Wednesday in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications laboratory paper, The Journalist.

Regina Thunder Hawk, a senior anthropology major from Rosebud, S.D., said she believed the remains of at least five American Indians have been housed in Bessey Hall.

"We are horrified that this kind of mistreatment could occur in the first place," she said. "How would you feel if you found out your grandma's bones were sitting in a drawer?"

But Paul Schreier, engineering and technology senator, said some of the bills' wording could be taken as accusatory.

"When we say demand we are implying (UNL has) not complied," Schreier said.

ASUN

The bill also recommends the NAGRPA committee at UNL file a report with the national committee, which could lead to an investigation.

It also recommends that the department ensure research proposals are sensitive to the cultural and religious beliefs of American Indians.

Thunder Hawk said she wants UNL to talk not only with tribal councils but grassroots Native Americans and learn about their culture.

She said in her culture, "It is not OK to play with the dead."

ASUN also passed government bill No. 5 encouraging the Affirmative Action and Diversity Office to have continued conversations with students about the racial climate at UNL and use other suggestions made by the Office for Civil Rights last week.

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THE DAILY NEBRASKAN

Selection of 1960s stamps to start

WASHINGTON (AP) — Martin Luther King Jr. and the Kennedy brothers, the twist and Woodstock, the Peace Corps and the Vietnam War are among subjects being proposed for stamps commemorating the 1960s.

The Postal Service is inviting Americans to vote during May on their favorites, with 15 stamps to be issued as a special commemorative set.

Similar sets are being issued for each decade in this century. Balloting will be held later for stamps of the '70s, '80s and '90s.

"The '60s was a very pivotal time in our nation's history and played a significant role in shaping the lives of many Americans," Postmaster General Marvin Runyon said Wednesday.

In February voters selected stamps to commemorate the 1950s, including such topics as drive-in movies, "I Love Lucy" and Dr. Seuss' "The Cat In The Hat."

The Postal Service has selected the stamps representing the decades covering the years 1900-1949 for the Celebrate the Century program.

The official 1960s ballot will be available in May at all post offices and at the Celebrate the Century Web site: <http://stampvote.msn.com>.

Ballots also will be available at other locations, including Ford Motor Co. dealerships, to encourage its customers to vote for the "Ford Mustang" stamp. Motown Cafe restaurants will be rallying votes for "The Motown Sound" and the New York Yankees will also hold a series of 1960s balloting days at Yankee Stadium to bolster votes for the subject, "Roger Maris Breaks Home Run Record."

The proposed topics are:
■ People and events: Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial; the struggle for

civil rights; the Peace Corps; the Vietnam War; the political careers of John and Robert Kennedy; Americans take to the streets in demonstrations; the Great Society and Medicare.

■ Arts and entertainment: The Motown Sound; pop art; the movie "Easy Rider"; "Star Trek" television series; the Beatles; "Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In" television series; the novel "Catch 22"; the Woodstock weekend of mud and music.

■ Sports: Roger Maris breaks Babe Ruth's home run record; televised golf; Super Bowl kicks off; Green Bay Packers.

■ Science and technology: man walks on moon; environmental awareness; television "live via satellite"; the computer chip; lasers.

■ Lifestyle: everyone twist; Ford Mustang; Barbie Doll; the peace symbol; shopping malls; the mod look.