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## **Tobacco and Pharmacies Don't Mix: Truth Initiative Attends Annual Walgreens Shareholder Meeting, Urges Pharmacy Chain to Go Tobacco-Free**

**Washington, D.C.** (Jan. 16, 2018) – Pharmacies are a trusted source of health information and services. Yet in 2016, more than 50,000 pharmacies still sold tobacco, including Walgreens, the nation's second largest pharmacy chain. Tobacco is the number one preventable cause of death in the United States and shareholders of Walgreens have repeatedly called for the removal of the deadly products from store shelves. Truth Initiative, the national public health organization that directs and funds the youth tobacco prevention campaign, **truth**, plans to attend the Walgreens shareholder meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz. on January 17 where the organization, along with its youth activists, will again ask the company to reconsider selling tobacco products.

Public opinion supports banning tobacco from pharmacies. 66 percent of U.S. adults favor a ban on tobacco products in pharmacy stores, including nearly half of smokers, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Further, a recent survey conducted by Truth Initiative found that 82 percent of Walgreens shoppers agree that "the primary focus of stores with pharmacies should be selling products that help people stay and get healthy."

"Despite significant progress in reducing the rate of youth smoking, tobacco still kills more than 540,000 Americans each year," said Robin Koval, CEO and President of Truth Initiative. "We commend CVS and other independent pharmacies for voluntarily eliminating tobacco, but we won't rest until all pharmacies, including Walgreens, remove tobacco from their shelves. This alone has the potential to save thousands of lives."

By not removing tobacco from their shelves, Walgreens and other pharmacies act as one of the tobacco industry's main marketing outlets. More than 93 percent of the tobacco industry's \$8.5 billion annual marketing expenditure goes to marketing in retail environments like Walgreens, including in-store advertisements, discounts and product displays behind check-out counters.

Truth Initiative's presence at the Walgreens shareholder meeting comes on the heels of the January 10<sup>th</sup> **truth**-led zombie-themed demonstration outside of Walgreens' Washington, D.C. flagship store, where teens and young adults, as well as local organizations and colleges from the D.C. area, dressed up to symbolize the consequences of smoking and protest Walgreens' sale of tobacco products. Participants also drove awareness through social media and a petition hosted on [thetruth.com](http://thetruth.com), which has already accumulated thousands of signatures. **truth** is urging people to sign and share the petition until it closes on January 22.

Last year, people from across the country rallied outside the Walgreens shareholders meeting in New York City on January 26 to encourage the pharmacy chain to stop selling tobacco products. **truth** also organized a petition that collected over 5,300 youth signatures and partnered with DoSomething.org on an effort that engaged more than 67,000 young people to encourage pharmacies to remove tobacco products from their stores.

For more information and to sign the petition to remove tobacco from Walgreens' shelves, visit [thetruth.com/zombiemarch](http://thetruth.com/zombiemarch).

### **About truth**

**truth**<sup>®</sup> is one of the most successful and one of the largest national youth tobacco prevention campaigns. The campaign exposes the tactics of the tobacco industry, the truth about addiction, and the health effects and social consequences of smoking. **truth** gives teens facts to make their own informed choices about tobacco use and inspires them to use their social influence and creativity in the fight against tobacco. The campaign is credited with preventing hundreds of thousands of teens from starting to smoke, and is working to make this the generation that ends smoking for good. To learn more, visit [thetruth.com](http://thetruth.com). **truth** is part of Truth Initiative<sup>®</sup>, a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. To learn more about Truth Initiative's work speaking, seeking and spreading the truth about tobacco, visit [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).