

## The Health Care Blog

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June 15, 2009

### FDA Regulation of Tobacco Called 'Death Sentence'

By MERRILL GOOZNER

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Legislation headed for President Obama's desk that would give the Food and Drug Administration regulatory authority over tobacco was called a "death sentence" for agency morale by longtime FDA observer Jim Dickinson, editor of *FDA Webview* (subscription required).

*The impact of this bill internally will be like a death sentence, steadily killing the agency's old public health spirit and replacing it with a strange hybrid. This new ethos will have to blend public health and safety with toleration for and husbandry of death-dealing products that have no plausible relationship to the diverse family of other products regulated by FDA.*



Dickinson predicts the fate of tobacco regulation at the agency will be the same as control of narcotics, which was first subjected to FDA regulation in 1966. The short-lived Bureau of Drug Abuse Control (BDAC) was only at the FDA for two years before authority was shifted to the Treasury's Bureau of Narcotics, which was later merged into the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Last week, criticism of the Waxman-Kennedy legislation came largely from the right, with the Cato Institute leading the charge on behalf of small tobacco companies who claim FDA regulation will cement Philip Morris' stranglehold on the cigarette market by making introduction of new products nearly impossible. From a public health perspective, who cares?

