



Investors Demand Action from Hollywood on Smoking in Youth-Rated Films to Save 1,000,000 lives

Investors with \$64 billion urge Hollywood studios to make youth-rated movies tobacco-free, as a new web-platform from As You Sow tracks investments in tobacco and entertainment companies that promote tobacco to kids

Oakland, CALIF – October 3, 2017 – A new website tracking mutual fund investments in companies responsible for kid's initiation to tobacco was released today by non-profit environmental health watchdog *As You Sow*.

With tobacco-related illness the world's number one cause of preventable death, *As You Sow* created [Tobacco Free Funds](#), a free online tool that allows investors *for the first time ever* to determine how their retirement savings are invested in tobacco and tobacco-promoting industries.

The platform analyzes mutual funds and ETFs for stock investments in both cigarette companies and entertainment companies that produce and distribute youth-rated films with imagery of tobacco. The Surgeon General and CDC report that smoking in youth-rated (G, PG, PG-13) films significantly increases the likelihood that youth will begin to smoke. This initiation often leads to a lifetime addiction and for many an early death.

Tobacco Free Funds scores each mutual fund by measuring the fund's investments in tobacco companies and in entertainment companies that help recruit youth to smoke by failing to have strong policies against smoking in movies targeted toward children. It enables every person who owns shares of a mutual fund to see what they actually own and how they are profiting from the companies that perpetuate this health crisis.

The new tool comes as **investor groups worth \$64 billion published an [open letter](#)** to the movie studio's parent companies, calling for kid-rated movies to be smoke-free. The investors' recommendations align with an [open letter signed by major US health organizations](#) (representing 630,000 doctors) published a month ago.

Austin Wilson, Environmental Health Program Manager at *As You Sow* said, "Investments in tobacco are embedded in our pension funds, IRAs, and 401(k)s but most of us are not even aware of it. This free platform shows people if they own tobacco stocks, it allows them to find funds without tobacco, and helps them talk to their retirement plan administrators. It also educates investors about the role that Hollywood plays in youth smoking."

Stanton Glantz, Professor of Medicine at the University of California San Francisco and Director of the UCSF [Smokefree Movies](#) project said, "There is no question that exposing children and adolescents to onscreen smoking in movies stimulates them to start smoking. There is a long well-documented history of collusion between the tobacco industry and Hollywood – it's time for the media companies to stop ignoring the science and stop promoting tobacco in media targeted at kids."

In 2012, the US Surgeon General produced a [landmark report](#) illustrating the impact of smoking in movies on children stating, "The evidence is sufficient to conclude that there is a causal relationship between depictions of smoking in the movies and the initiation of smoking among young people." In 2014 the Centers for Disease



Control and Prevention (CDC) also [condemned the practice](#), stating, “Giving an R rating to future movies with smoking would be expected to reduce the number of teen smokers by nearly 1 in 5 (18%) and prevent one million deaths from smoking among children alive today.”

In July 2017, the CDC again emphasized the issue when it reported in its [Morbidity and Mortality Report](#) that there had been substantial progress in eliminating smoking from youth-rated movies after 2005 which stopped in 2010. Had the prior trend continued, all youth-rated films would have been smokefree by 2015.

Walt Disney is the only major movie studio that prohibits tobacco in movies it produces; Paramount, Universal, Warner Bros., Twentieth Century Fox, and Sony do not prohibit tobacco imagery. Overall, about [one in four youth-rated films included tobacco in 2016 according to UCSF’s Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education](#).

Tobacco Free Funds also helps users speak out against entertainment companies with lax smoking policies, find tobacco free funds to invest in, and provides a toolkit to reform company 401(k)s. Over 2,000 U.S. open-end mutual funds and ETFs own tobacco stocks, with over \$8 trillion dollars in assets under management. Among equity-based portfolios, two-thirds of all assets are invested in funds that own tobacco stocks.

This is the third mutual fund transparency website from *As You Sow*. In 2015, *As You Sow* launched [Fossil Free Funds](#) so that people could see if their retirement investments are funding climate change. In 2016, *As You Sow* followed up with [Deforestation Free Funds](#), which screens funds for investments in deforestation-causing palm oil production.

For more information, visit TobaccoFreeFunds.org.

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[As You Sow](#) is a nonprofit organization that promotes environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies.