

American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)

Big Tobacco has long sought to use front groups to do its dirty work. After all, tobacco companies don't have much credibility to directly oppose public health campaigns. Funding research and policy efforts through third-party front groups is a way to create a veneer of academic or political credibility and to raise doubt about legitimate research, while shrouding ties to the tobacco industry.

One such long-time tobacco front group is called ALEC - the American Legislative Exchange Council. Its members and funders have included Lorillard Tobacco Company, Philip Morris Management Corporation, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Smokeless Tobacco Council, Cigar Association of America, Inc., and, more recently, NJOY - an e-cigarette company.

For years the tobacco industry has been one of ALEC's chief underwriters. The nation's major tobacco companies have given large cash contributions in the range of \$200,000 a year, sponsored golf and tennis events at ALEC meetings, and paid legal bills for them. In fact, in some years the money ALEC received just from tobacco "sponsorships" overshadowed all other sponsor contributions combined.

"ALEC has a history of receiving substantial funding from the tobacco industry, in return for which it has promoted legislation interfering with local control, nonsmokers' rights, and health policy," according to Rebekah Wilce, Reporter and Researcher at The Center for Media and Democracy. Her organization publishes an excellent website resource called [ALEC Exposed](#).

One legislative priority for ALEC is state preemption of local health and safety laws.

Preemptive legislation may sometimes look like good public health policy on the surface, but it often sets a weak state standard AND makes it illegal for cities and counties to enact stronger laws. For example, a state may enact a law creating non-smoking sections in workplaces and public places but then prohibit local governments from requiring those places to be 100% smokefree. Philip Morris and other tobacco companies have long sought preemption of local smokefree laws. ALEC has pushed for preemption not only of smokefree workplace policies, but also with respect to a range of other public health and community issues, including local pesticide ordinances, workers' rights, and rent control. ALEC is currently working with former Philip Morris smokefree preemption partner, the National Restaurant Association, to push for preemption of local "living wage" laws.

An organization related to ALEC is an influential group called the "State Policy Network," which helps link together libertarian think tanks with an ALEC-backed agenda.

While the names of tobacco industry front groups may have changed somewhat, their interference tactics remain the same. By exposing ALEC as a front group for the tobacco industry (and, increasingly, for e-cigarette companies), you can help others take the misinformation promoted by this group with a grain of salt.

Additional Reading:

[SourceWatch: ALEC](#)

[ALEC Exposed](#)

[Exposing Juul: New Vaping Titan is Deploying Big Tobacco's Old Playbook](#)

[ALEC and the Tobacco Industry](#)

[The State Policy Network's Cozy Relationship with Big Tobacco](#)

[Did ALEC Found SPN? 1991 Report Suggests So, Exposes SPN Agenda](#)

[The ALEC-Backed War on Local Democracy](#)

[Four Ways ALEC Tried to Ruin Your State this Year](#)

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