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Both Sides in Cigarette Fight Hold National Essay Contests

CHICAGO, Nov. 4 (AP) — A pair of essay contests sponsored by bitter rivals in the battle over cigarette smoking have the same goal of increasing public awareness of the issue, the sponsors said Monday.

A contest announced last month by the Philip Morris Companies asks how an advertising ban on tobacco products would affect "the future of free expression in a free market economy," said Guy L. Smith, a spokesman for the New York-based maker of Marlboro cigarettes.

Mr. Smith said the national contest was a response to a call by for a ban on all tobacco advertising except at the point of sale. This call was made last year by the American Medical Association, which is based in Chicago.

Cigarette advertising is already prohibited on television and radio.

Contest Aimed at Law Students

Another contest, announced Monday by Doctors Ought to Care, primarily aimed at law students, asks: "Are tobacco company executives criminally liable for the deaths, diseases and fires that their products cause?"

The contest, with a \$1,000 top prize, is a response to the Philip Morris contest, Dr. Alan Blum, founder of the physicians' organization, said in a telephone interview from his office in Manhasset, L.I.

"Our contention is that there may be criminal violations," Dr. Blum said. He said the essays would be judged on the quality of their legal arguments. "It is conceivable that a winning essay could destroy the argument that tobacco company executives are criminally responsible," he said.

The contest is being conducted with the Northeastern University School of Law in Boston and the Tobacco Prod-

ucts Liability Project, which promotes civil lawsuits against tobacco companies, Dr. Blum said.

First Amendment a Factor

Mr. Smith said the Philip Morris contest, which would have winners in each state and a \$15,000 grand prize, reflected the company's view that a ban on advertising in print would violate First Amendment guarantees of free speech.

"There is an unfortunate and dangerous trend today toward control and censorship by an array of self-appointed social guardians," Mr. Smith said in a telephone interview. "Today, they want to censor the tobacco industry; tomorrow it may be typewriters and presses."

Dr. Ronald Davis, an Atlanta physician working for the advertising ban, said Philip Morris's real reason for the essay contest was to gather arguments the company could use to fight an advertising ban.

"It's humorous that the tobacco industry, with all its resources, is not confident in its own legal arguments," Dr. Davis said.

Mr. Smith denied Dr. Davis's statement. "The contest is designed to do just what it is doing and that is to focus attention on censorship," he said, adding that the company had received nearly 1,000 entries.