

## **Statement by the Vermont Tobacco Evaluation And Review Board Concerning the Tobacco Trust Fund**

The Vermont Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board (VTERB) opposes diversion of funds from the Tobacco Trust Fund to meet other State needs because of the risk such actions pose to long-term funding of the State's comprehensive tobacco control program. This risk is amplified by the lack of contributions to the Fund in recent years.

The Tobacco Trust Fund was established by the Legislature to create a self-sustaining source of support for the State's tobacco prevention and cessation programs which is not dependent on tobacco sales volume (18 V.S.A., section 9502). Tobacco use is the single most important cause of preventable disease and early death in the United States. Support for Vermont's comprehensive tobacco control programs has a positive impact on the well-being of the State because of the significant amounts of serious diseases prevented and health costs averted due to reduced tobacco use. Long-term support for these programs should not be compromised in response to short term fiscal issues. The Board urges policy makers to consider the overall health and economic interests of Vermonters and seek more sustainable sources to meet the State's current needs.

The VTERB is an independent board established by and accountable to the Legislature for evaluation and review and recommendation of funding levels for tobacco prevention, cessation, and control programs supported by the State of Vermont.