WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §16-9C-1

§16-9C-1. Findings and purpose.

(a) Cigarette smoking presents serious public health concerns as well as serious financial concerns for the state. In response, the state pursued legal claims against leading tobacco product manufacturers to recover damages caused by the public health and financial consequences of cigarette smoking. On November 23, 1998, leading United States tobacco product manufacturers entered into a settlement agreement, entitled "master settlement agreement", with the state. The master settlement agreement obligates these manufacturers to pay substantial sums to the state in exchange for a release of past, present and future claims against them.

(b) The tobacco growers of the state are not a party or a beneficiary of the master settlement agreement.

(c) In view of the master settlement agreement, similar agreements between other states and tobacco product manufacturers, and the heightened public awareness and scrutiny of the dangers associated with cigarette smoking, the state has a significant interest in protecting tobacco growers from negative economic and financial consequences arising from changes in the cigarette industry, such as decreased consumption, demand and prices.

(d) On January 21, 1999, leading United States tobacco product manufacturers agreed to establish a national tobacco community trust, for the sole benefit of tobacco growers, payable over a twelve-year period, beginning in the year 1999. The tobacco growers in this state (and thirteen other states) are eligible to participate in the national tobacco community trust upon the creation of a state tobacco grower board, which will consummate a tobacco grower settlement with the tobacco product manufacturers.

WV Legislature