

June 13, 2018



The Honorable Richard Burr
United States Senate
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thom Tillis
United States Senate
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sens. Burr and Tillis:

We are writing to you today to draw your attention to the lack of transparency and accountability among certain global institutions and how this ultimately threatens our economic livelihoods. As tobacco farm families in North Carolina, we are several steps removed from the decision-making process of these organizations and motivations. But the actions taken at organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international agencies have a direct impact on the U.S. economy, including the tobacco supply chain.

We respect the core missions of these organizations, and the work they do to promote peace, prosperity, and health. However, there is clear difference between "mission" of purpose and "bias agendas". The actions attracting attention are not new and neither is the fact that some of these entities have strayed from their core missions and have done so with seemingly little oversight and active indifference from the U.S. Government – our government, that funds the largest share of the operating budgets of these organizations. For example, as part of the WHO's campaign to end tobacco use and production around the world, it has a policy that prohibits any communication or interaction with the tobacco industry. That would include farmers as well. This is despite promising technological innovation taking place within the industry and the American farmer being the undisputed producer of the world's most compliant and premium tobaccos.

The WHO is now actively pressuring a large and seemingly expanding spectrum of UN-related international organizations to follow its lead in refusing any and all interaction with the tobacco sector or any person or organization linked to it. For example, the WHO is promoting simultaneous campaigns at the Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN Secretariat, Development Program and the Economic and Social Council, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Customs Organization, the World Bank and elsewhere, regardless of how relevant our US industry contributions are to their respective missions. The campaign at the ILO is particularly concerning considering American tobacco growers have invested significant resources related to the working conditions on tobacco farms.

In conclusion, we respectfully encourage decisive leadership from U.S. representatives to these organizations to help provide an inclusive dialogue with farmers and the entire tobacco industry moving forward. Indeed, there must be a fair and transparent dialogue that includes all stakeholders, and the U.S. Government must help ensure that policies enacted in New York, Geneva or Rome do not threaten the livelihoods of hard-working Americans

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Steve Griffin, President

Sincerely,

Graham Boyd, Executive Vice President

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