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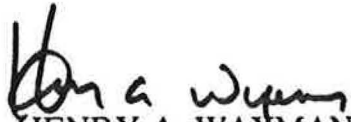
To the Editor:


Mr. Raspberry's column on April 18 ("Getting an Unfair Hearing") criticized the persistent questioning of tobacco company executives at a recent hearing of the Health and the Environment Subcommittee. Unfortunately, his column overlooked a key point - the significant new information elicited by these questions. Some highlights:

- * Contrary to repeated denials in the past, Philip Morris CEO William Campbell admitted that Philip Morris had indeed suppressed a 1983 study signalling the addictiveness of nicotine. Mr. Campbell also released the author of the study, Dr. Victor De Noble, from a secrecy agreement, paving the way for important testimony before Congress concerning industry research on addictiveness.
- * For the first time, the tobacco CEOs agreed that they can -- and do -- alter nicotine concentrations through blending tobacco leaves. In one important exchange, Mr. Campbell of Philip Morris conceded that his company uses nicotine-rich blends to make the "Merit" cigarettes advertised as being lowest in nicotine.
- * Alexander Spears of Lorillard conceded that, contrary to his testimony three weeks earlier, nicotine levels in cigarettes may have been going up -- not down -- over the last ten years.
- * The CEOs agreed to provide to the Subcommittee previously secret documents on the tobacco companies' health effects and addictiveness research, including documents concerning animal and human experiments with nicotine.

When a panel of CEOs resolutely denies even the most well-established scientific facts about the health risks of their product, skeptical questions are in order. The tobacco executives aren't entitled to special treatment -- and they received none last week.

Sincerely,


HENRY A. WAXMAN
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Health and the Environment


RON WYDEN
Member of Congress