Smoking in movies

Hollywood’s lost decade, measured in children.

Tobacco policies adopted by the major studios between 2007 and 2013 allowed smoking in 42% of their top-grossing PG-13 films and exposed moviegoers to 47 billion tobacco impressions. The MPAA must replace failed policies with an R-rating standard that truly protects children.

Over the past decade, all six MPAA-member studios have adopted policies on tobacco in their youth-rated movies. These policies have failed young audiences in at least three ways:

- From 2007 to 2010, the studios reduced the share of PG-13 films with smoking by less than 25%, in absolute terms. There has been no progress since 2010, despite three more studios adopting policies.
- The number of tobacco incidents in a typical major studio PG-13 film with smoking in 2016 is nearly double what it was in 2007.
- Over the past decade, the major studios have accounted for 89% of PG-13 tobacco impressions delivered to theater audiences.

The MPAA and the studios have known since 2003 that on-screen smoking is a uniquely powerful threat to children’s health. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concludes that exposure to smoking in the movies causes youth smoking. Youth-rated movies with smoking (primarily PG-13) will recruit three million young smokers in this generation and cause one million tobacco deaths.

One little letter R will save a million lives.