

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1999

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SENATE BILL 915*

Short Title: Tobacco Reserve Fund/Nonparticipating Mfg.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senator Rand.

Referred to: Judiciary I.

April 14, 1999

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO CREATE A TOBACCO RESERVE FUND FOR TOBACCO PRODUCT
3 MANUFACTURERS NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE MASTER SETTLEMENT
4 AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 Section 1. Chapter 66 of the General Statutes is amended by adding the
7 following new Article to read:

8 **"ARTICLE 35.**
9 **"TOBACCO RESERVE FUND.**

10 **"§ 66-280. Definitions.**

11 As used in this Article:

12 (1) 'Adjusted for inflation' means increased in accordance with the formula
13 for inflation adjustment set forth in Exhibit C to the Master Settlement
14 Agreement.

15 (2) 'Affiliate' means a person who directly or indirectly owns or controls, is
16 owned or controlled by, or is under common ownership or control with,
17 another person. Solely for purposes of this definition, the terms 'owns,'
18 'is owned,' and 'ownership' mean ownership of an equity interest, or the
19 equivalent thereof, of ten percent (10%) or more, and the term 'person'

1 means an individual, partnership, committee, association, corporation,
2 or any other organization or group of persons.

3 (3) 'Allocable share' means Allocable Share as that term is defined in the
4 Master Settlement Agreement.

5 (4) 'Cigarette' means any product that contains nicotine, is intended to be
6 burned or heated under ordinary conditions of use, and consists of or
7 contains (i) any roll of tobacco wrapped in paper or in any substance not
8 containing tobacco; or (ii) tobacco, in any form, that is functional in the
9 product, which, because of its appearance, the type of tobacco used in
10 the filler, or its packaging and labeling, is likely to be offered to, or
11 purchased by, consumers as a cigarette; or (iii) any roll of tobacco
12 wrapped in any substance containing tobacco which, because of its
13 appearance, the type of tobacco used in the filler, or its packaging and
14 labeling, is likely to be offered to, or purchased by, consumers as a
15 cigarette described in clause (i) of this definition. The term 'cigarette'
16 includes 'roll-your-own' (i.e., any tobacco which, because of its
17 appearance, type, packaging, or labeling is suitable for use and likely to
18 be offered to, or purchased by, consumers as tobacco for making
19 cigarettes). For purposes of this definition of 'cigarette,' 0.09 ounces of
20 'roll-your-own' tobacco shall constitute one individual 'cigarette.'

21 (5) 'Master Settlement Agreement' means the settlement agreement (and
22 related documents) entered into on November 23, 1998, by the State and
23 leading United States tobacco product manufacturers.

24 (6) 'Qualified escrow fund' means an escrow arrangement with a federally
25 or State chartered financial institution having no affiliation with any
26 tobacco product manufacturer and having assets of at least one billion
27 dollars (\$1,000,000,000) where such arrangement requires that such
28 financial institution hold the escrowed funds' principal for the benefit of
29 releasing parties and prohibits the tobacco product manufacturer placing
30 the funds into escrow from using, accessing, or directing the use of the
31 funds' principal except as consistent with G.S. 66-281(b).

32 (7) 'Released claims' means Released Claims as that term is defined in the
33 Master Settlement Agreement.

34 (8) 'Releasing parties' means Releasing Parties as that term is defined in the
35 Master Settlement Agreement.

36 (9) 'Tobacco Product Manufacturer' means an entity that after the effective
37 date of this Article directly (and not exclusively through any affiliate):

38 a. Manufactures cigarettes anywhere that such manufacturer intends
39 to be sold in the United States, including cigarettes intended to be
40 sold in the United States through an importer (except where such
41 importer is an original participating manufacturer, as that term is
42 defined in the Master Settlement Agreement, that will be
43 responsible for the payments under the Master Settlement

1 Agreement with respect to such cigarettes as a result of the
2 provisions of subsection II(mm) of the Master Settlement
3 Agreement and that pays the taxes specified in subsection II(z) of
4 the Master Settlement Agreement, and provided that the
5 manufacturer of such cigarettes does not market or advertise such
6 cigarettes in the United States);

7 b. Is the first purchaser anywhere for resale in the United States of
8 cigarettes manufactured anywhere that the manufacturer does not
9 intend to be sold in the United States; or

10 c. Becomes a successor of an entity described in sub-subdivision a.
11 or b. of this subdivision.

12 The term 'Tobacco Product Manufacturer' shall not include an affiliate
13 of a tobacco product manufacturer unless such affiliate itself falls within
14 any of sub-subdivisions a. through c. of this subdivision.

15 (10) 'Units sold' means the number of individual cigarettes sold in the State
16 by the applicable tobacco product manufacturer (whether directly or
17 through a distributor, retailer, or similar intermediary or intermediaries)
18 during the year in question, as measured by excise taxes collected by the
19 State on packs (or 'roll-your-own' tobacco containers). The Secretary of
20 Revenue shall promulgate such rules as are necessary to ascertain the
21 amount of State excise tax paid on the cigarettes of such tobacco
22 product manufacturer for each year.

23 **"§ 66-281. Requirements.**

24 (a) Any tobacco product manufacturer selling cigarettes to consumers within the
25 State (whether directly or through a distributor, retailer, or similar intermediary or
26 intermediaries) after the effective date of this Article shall do one of the following:

27 (1) Become a participating manufacturer (as that term is defined in section
28 II(jj) of the Master Settlement Agreement) and generally perform its
29 financial obligations under the Master Settlement Agreement; or

30 (2) Place into a qualified escrow fund by April 15 of the year following the
31 year in question the following amounts (as such amounts are adjusted
32 for inflation):

33 a. 1999: \$.0094241 per unit sold after the effective date of this
34 Article.

35 b. 2000: \$.0104712 per unit sold after the effective date of this
36 Article.

37 c. For each of 2001 and 2002: \$.0136125 per unit sold after the
38 effective date of this Article.

39 d. For each of 2003 through 2006: \$.0167539 per unit sold after the
40 effective date of this Article.

41 e. For each of 2007 and each year thereafter: \$.0188482 per unit
42 sold after the effective date of this Article.

1 (b) A tobacco product manufacturer that places funds into escrow pursuant to
2 subdivision (2) of section (a) of this subsection shall receive the interest or other
3 appreciation on such funds as earned. Such funds themselves shall be released from
4 escrow only under the following circumstances:

5 (1) To pay a judgment or settlement on any released claim brought against
6 such tobacco product manufacturer by the State or any releasing party
7 located or residing in the State. Funds shall be released from escrow
8 under this subdivision (i) in the order in which they were placed into
9 escrow and (ii) only to the extent and at the time necessary to make
10 payments required under such judgment or settlement;

11 (2) To the extent that a tobacco product manufacturer establishes that the
12 amount it was required to place into escrow in a particular year was
13 greater than the State's allocable share of the total payments that such
14 manufacturer would have been required to make in that year under the
15 Master Settlement Agreement (as determined pursuant to section
16 IX(i)(2) of the Master Settlement Agreement, and before any the
17 adjustments or offsets described in section IX(i)(3) of that Agreement
18 other than the Inflation Adjustment) had it been a participating
19 manufacturer, the excess shall be released from escrow and revert back
20 to such tobacco product manufacturer; or

21 (3) To the extent not released from escrow under subdivisions (1) or (2) of
22 this subsection, funds shall be released from escrow and revert back to
23 such tobacco product manufacturer 25 years after the date on which they
24 were placed into escrow.

25 (c) Each tobacco product manufacturer that elects to place funds into escrow
26 pursuant to this section shall annually certify to the Attorney General that it is in
27 compliance with this section. The Attorney General may bring a civil action on behalf of
28 the State against any tobacco product manufacturer that fails to place into escrow the
29 funds required under this section. Any tobacco product manufacturer that fails in any
30 year to place into escrow the funds required under this section shall:

31 (1) Be required within 15 days to place such funds into escrow as shall
32 bring it into compliance with this section. The court, upon a finding of
33 a violation of this subsection, may impose a civil penalty (the clear
34 proceeds of which shall be paid to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund
35 in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2) in an amount not to exceed five
36 percent (5%) of the amount improperly withheld from escrow per day of
37 the violation and in a total amount not to exceed one hundred percent
38 (100%) of the original amount improperly withheld from escrow;

39 (2) In the case of a knowing violation, be required within 15 days to place
40 such funds into escrow as shall bring it into compliance with this
41 section. The court, upon a finding of a knowing violation of subdivision
42 (2) of subsection (a) of this section, may impose a civil penalty (the
43 clear proceeds of which shall be paid to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture

1 Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2) in an amount not to exceed
2 fifteen percent (15%) of the amount improperly withheld from escrow
3 per day of the violation and in a total amount not to exceed three
4 hundred percent (300%) of the original amount improperly withheld
5 from escrow; and

6 (3) In the case of a second knowing violation, be prohibited from selling
7 cigarettes to consumers within the State (whether directly or through a
8 distributor, retailer, or similar intermediary) for a period not to exceed
9 two years.

10 Each failure to make an annual deposit required under this section shall constitute a
11 separate violation."

12 Section 2. This act is effective when it becomes law.