

Given how many times over the years tobacco company officials have denied that smoking causes cancer, last week's confession from Liggett, maker of Chesterfield cigarettes, was astonishing in its directness. "We at Liggett know and acknowledge that ... cigarette smoking causes health problems, including lung cancer, heart and vascular disease, and emphysema," said Bennett LeBow, chairman of Liggett's parent company, Brooke Group, in a written statement. "We at Liggett also know and acknowledge that ... nicotine is addictive."

the Liggett deal generates sufficient bad publicity for tobacco, the Republican majority in Congress might find this is the wrong fight to pick. Although LeBow did not try to implicate Liggett in the marketing of cigarettes to minors, the settlement statement he signed makes an admission long denied by tobacco companies: "Liggett acknowledges that the tobacco industry markets to 'youth,' which means those under 18 years of age." Needless to say, other tobacco companies still deny that, too.