

From deal to dust

Major events in the life and death of the tobacco bill.

June 20, 1997: Mississippi and other states announce a settlement of their lawsuits against tobacco. \$368.5 billion over 25 years in exchange for a limit on punitive damages for past behavior and a \$5 billion annual cap on liability claims by individuals. Deal requires action by Congress and the president.

July 29: Senate Commerce Committee holds its first hearing on the settlement.

Feb 24, 1998: Tobacco CEO's testify.

April 1: By a 19-1 vote, panel approves bill crafted by chairman John McCain, R-Ariz. Cost raised to \$900 bn and unlimited liability.

April 8: Steven Goldstone, CEO of RJR Nabisco, announces cigarette makers would not agree to the Senate bill.

April 20: Kessler and Koop send letter to Congress urging "no special protections" for the industry.

May 14: Senate Majority Whip Don Nickles announces opposition to the bill and says he hopes to kill it.

May 18: Senate begins debate on the McCain bill. Majority Leader Trent Lott adds a GOP-sponsored measure to aid tobacco farmers.

June 2: Senate votes to continue consideration of the bill (Lott had tried to bring up another bill) and then approves a measure that would use \$3 billion to pay the health-care costs of veterans with smoking-related illnesses.

June 8: Lott says the bill has "lost control" and should be pulled from the Senate floor.

June 9: Senate votes 52-46, to approve a GOP-sponsored amendment to use \$16 billion of the bill's revenue in the first five years for anti-drug measures.

June 10: Senate approves an amendment that would use \$46 billion of the bill's funding in the first 10 years to cut taxes for married couples earning less than \$40,000 annually and to allow self-employed workers to deduct fully their health care costs.

June 16: Senate votes, 49-48, to approve a GOP measure that would limit the hourly fees of lawyers handling tobacco litigation to \$500 - \$4,000 depending on when they filed the lawsuits.

June 17: Senate votes to withdraw the bill from the Senate floor after Lott says it has gone "far far afield."



Goldstone:
CEO, RJR Nabisco

Source: Excerpts from USA Today, 6/19/98