

# DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.

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## A SERVICE SORORITY

### Grand Chapter

#### **PROHIBITING THE USE OF MENTHOL AS A CHARACTERIZING FLAVOR IN CIGARETTES**

**WHEREAS**, tobacco use is the foremost preventable cause of premature death among African Americans, claiming 45,000 African American lives a year, killing more African Americans than violence, AIDS, and car accidents COMBINED;

**WHEREAS**, according to the 2012 Surgeon General Report on the prevention of tobacco use, adolescent and young adult smokers smoke menthol cigarettes at a higher percentage than any other age group and menthol cigarettes are especially popular among Black youth who smoke; and

**WHEREAS**, the use of menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes contributes to the overall burden of tobacco-related disease among African Americans, and 67% of overall health disparities in mortality are related to the high smoking prevalence of African American men; and

**WHEREAS**, menthol cigarettes are cheaper in poor communities and in communities with a greater concentration of African Americans and are more likely to be marketed in stores near schools with higher proportions of African American students; and

**WHEREAS**, the tobacco industry has a well-documented history of targeting African Americans with “culturally friendly” advertising of menthol cigarettes, resulting in nearly 83% of African American smokers smoking menthol cigarettes (compared to 24% of white smokers); and

**WHEREAS**, the tobacco manufacturers add menthol to cigarettes to mask the harsh taste of tobacco and alleviate the irritating effects of nicotine, making menthol cigarettes particularly attractive to kids. Youths experimenting with menthol cigarettes are at far greater risk of becoming regular, life-long smokers than those who experiment with non-menthol cigarettes; and

**WHEREAS**, 75.8% of African Americans support the elimination of menthol cigarettes and 44.5% of African American menthol smokers report they would quit smoking if menthol cigarettes were prohibited; and

**WHEREAS**, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, signed into law by President Barack Obama in June 2009 to prevent the uptake of tobacco by youth, gave the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the authority to regulate tobacco products and the FDA is currently reviewing information about menthol cigarettes and deciding what, if any, action to take; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC) was mandated by law to produce a report and recommendations to the FDA on the public health impact of menthol cigarettes, including its use among children and racial and ethnic minorities. The TPSAC report concluded that, “Removal of menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health in the United States;” and

**WHEREAS**, prohibiting the use of menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes could prevent as many as 600,000 smoking-related premature deaths by 2050, a third of whom would be African American; and

**WHEREAS**, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, American Public Health Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights, NAATPN, and many others support a ban on the use of menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes; and

**WHEREAS**, Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. is committed to the health and well-being of the African American community.

**THEREFORE, BE IT NOW RESOLVED**, that Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. requests that the FDA add menthol to the list of characterizing flavors that are prohibited as constituents or additives of cigarettes.

**Passed at the 51<sup>st</sup> National Convention July 2013 with 40,000 members in attendance.**

