

# Action on Smoking and Health Awards Former Pollock Cohen Partner Project Sunset Award for Courage in Public Health

We are proud to announce that former Pollock Cohen partner Chris Leung was awarded the Project Sunset Award for Courage in Public Health. The award, presented by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), is reserved for those in the vanguard of the fight to end the tobacco epidemic. Chris led the team in the landmark case forcing the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to begin the rulemaking process to ban menthol cigarettes. ASH, along with the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, the American Medical Association, and the National Medical Association were plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

We are proud of our firm's work in Public Impact Litigation. As a mission-driven firm, we believe that everyone should have access to affordable, high-quality healthcare, a clean environment, and a safe community—to name just a few of the issues that we care about. We are fierce advocates on the side of people. To that end, a core part of our work involves using the law—specifically, litigation, where appropriate—to help achieve important objectives for our clients and broader constituencies.

This matter demonstrates the extraordinary power of proactive litigation. After years of the FDA ignoring and slow-walking Congress' directive to regulate menthol cigarettes, we brought a lawsuit against the FDA. On behalf of our clients—the American Medical Association, the National Medical Association, the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, and Action on Smoking and Health—we won a powerful victory that is resulting in the ban on menthol cigarettes.

A full statement by ASH follows below.

## **CHRISTOPHER K. LEUNG RECEIVES PROJECT SUNSET AWARD FOR COURAGE IN PUBLIC HEALTH**

**NEW YORK CITY, NY – DECEMBER 8, 2022** – Action on Smoking and Health awarded the *Project Sunset Award for Courage in Public Health* to Christopher K. Leung, the lead attorney in the landmark case forcing the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to begin the rulemaking process to ban menthol cigarettes. ASH, along with the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, the American Medical Association, and the National Medical Association were plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

Mr. Leung is a partner at Pollock Cohen LLP and has a long-time passion for tobacco control, taking on this landmark case pro bono. The 2009 Tobacco Act which finally gave

authority over tobacco products to the Food and Drug Administration also banned flavored cigarettes except menthol, used by the vast majority of African Americans who smoke. Congress instructed the FDA to prioritize examining whether banning menthol would be in the interest of public health. In spite of mountains of evidence and a Citizen's Petition in 2013, the FDA took no action for more than a decade.

**Mr. Leung's victory will save countless lives and decrease health inequities in the United States.**

At the award ceremony at the New York University School of Global Public Health, guests were welcomed by ASH Trustee and former Dean Cheryl Heaton and ASH Executive Director Laurent Huber, who presented the award.

Mr. Leung then sat down with ASH Trustee and former Director of the Public Health Law Center Doug Blanke to discuss his career, his goal of helping people, and his desire to move the needle in public health. He spoke to the ability of law to affect change and those that inspired and motivated him along the way, noting that the public health space is full of strong allies who help you be courageous in the fight to create change and reduce inequities.

This is only the second *Courage in Public Health* – reserved for those in the vanguard of the fight to end the tobacco epidemic – to be awarded. ASH is honored to have been a part of this historic legal action, and pleased to be able to recognize Chris' efforts in holding the FDA accountable.

**About Action on Smoking & Health (ASH)**

Founded in 1967, Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) is America's oldest anti-tobacco organization, dedicated to a world with ZERO tobacco deaths. Because tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death worldwide, ASH supports bold solutions proportionate to the magnitude of the problem. <https://ash.org>.