

Summary of Tobacco Lawsuits and the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA)

This document provides a summary of the earliest and latest major lawsuits against U.S. tobacco companies, culminating in the landmark 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) that involved 46 states. It includes key case details, dates, amounts, and participating states, followed by a summary table.

1. Early and First State Settlements

- **Liggett Group Settlement (1996):** In March 1996, the Liggett Group reached a settlement with five states and more than 60 law firms. It was the first successful state-level settlement after decades of failed litigation efforts. The dollar amount was not publicly disclosed.
- **Mississippi Settlement (1997):** On July 3, 1997, Mississippi settled its case against major tobacco companies for \$3.6 billion, plus future annual payment obligations. This became a model for other states to pursue similar lawsuits.

2. The 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA)

On November 23, 1998, attorneys general from 46 states, along with the District of Columbia and several U.S. territories, signed the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) with major tobacco manufacturers, including Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds, Brown & Williamson, and Lorillard. Four states—Florida, Minnesota, Mississippi, and Texas—had already settled separately.

Under the MSA, tobacco companies agreed to pay the settling states billions of dollars annually in perpetuity, estimated at an average of \$10 billion per year, adjusted over time. The agreement also imposed strict marketing and advertising restrictions, required the release of internal tobacco industry documents, and established public health funding obligations.

All 46 states that signed the MSA receive payments directly. The four states that had reached earlier settlements (Florida, Minnesota, Mississippi, and Texas) continue to receive funds under their individual agreements.

3. Later Developments and Lawsuits

- **U.S. Department of Justice v. Tobacco Companies (1999):** Filed on September 22, 1999, under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO). The case led to findings of misconduct but did not result in a lump-sum monetary award like the state settlements.
- **North Carolina Payment (2024):** North Carolina received a \$139 million payment from tobacco companies as part of the ongoing MSA distribution.

- Massachusetts Settlement (2024): Massachusetts reached a \$600 million settlement with major tobacco manufacturers, in addition to its existing MSA payments.

4. Summary Table of Major Tobacco Settlements

Case / Settlement	Date	Amount / Terms	States / Parties Involved
Liggett Group Settlement	Mar 1996	Undisclosed amount	5 states and 60+ law firms
Mississippi Settlement	Jul 3, 1997	\$3.6 billion + annual payments	Mississippi
Master Settlement Agreement (MSA)	Nov 23, 1998	Billions per year (~\$10 billion/year avg)	46 states + D.C. + territories
DOJ v. Tobacco Companies (RICO)	Sep 22, 1999	No lump-sum award	U.S. DOJ vs. major tobacco companies
North Carolina Payment	2024	\$139 million	North Carolina (as part of MSA payments)
Massachusetts Settlement	2024	\$600 million	Massachusetts (state-level agreement)

5. References

- PBS Frontline: Tobacco Settlement Timeline
- EBSCO Research Starters: Mississippi Settles Lawsuit with Cigarette Makers
- Public Health Law Center: MSA Overview
- NIH PubMed Central: Tobacco Settlement Impacts
- U.S. DOJ: Tobacco Industry RICO Case
- North Carolina Department of Justice (2024 release)
- Massachusetts Attorney General (2024 release)