



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **Kretek International, Inc. Announces it Will Not Exhibit at PCA 2020**

**Company believes new approach by PCA does not support success of the tobacco industry as a whole.**

**(January 2020)** Kretek International, Inc. announces today that it will not exhibit at the 2020 Premium Cigar Association (PCA) trade show and convention this July. The decision includes all of the company's subsidiaries, including Phillips and King International, Inc. Historically, Kretek has been a major presence and influence at the annual PCA trade show with attention-getting Rolex and Harley Davidson motorcycle giveaways for Djarum, and a key role serving as the pinnacle Importer and Distributor of specialty tobacco products, including premium cigars, pipes and pipe tobacco, and other tobacco categories for many years. Their decision not to exhibit at PCA 2020 was not made lightly, as Kretek has been supporting and exhibiting at the RTDA/IPCPR/PCA's show for over 35 years, and Phillips & King has been a buyer and exhibitor for over 50 years. Their long-standing relationship and subsequent conclusion received serious examination before Kretek arrived at this determination

"We have always treated the PCA trade show as a smart launching pad for new releases and the best opportunity for retailers and suppliers to meet and build strong relationships," says Sean Cassar, President of Kretek International, Inc. "We've enjoyed learning about industry trends while receiving some of the biggest orders of our year at the show. The decision to move away from PCA was not an easy one, but after reviewing the state of the industry and our business, we recognized that our goals are not aligned."

Kretek believes that all cigar manufacturers and Importers should be working together, willing to openly discuss and manage efforts, as part of the PCA rebranding initiatives. This rebranding must direct the Premium Cigar legislative and regulatory endeavors in order to get the most benefit from the collective financial contributions made by the industry, and not to splinter the collective into separate entities.

Kretek and Phillips & King is a family-owned company who has supported brick and mortar retailers in all fifty states for over 114 years. They have always felt the importance to support other family-owned businesses who have helped build the business, by coming together as a united force. Kretek does not believe the PCA is moving in this direction, but rather one that seems to sacrifice segments of the industry in hopes of saving others.

While on the surface the new PCA tactics may seem logical to some depending on their business segment. However, as an international company, Kretek has firsthand knowledge of a negative outcome as similar efforts played out.

“Our Canadian subsidiary operated under this exact pretense,” says Cassar. “And the results were devastating. Driven primarily through big tobacco’s efforts, the market went dark, cigar stores lost their ability to have smoking lounges, stores could no longer advertise products, and in the end the market went to plain packaging across all categories. Small, independent family businesses in this environment had taken the approach that it was better to give up an arm to save the body. But in the end the regulators took both the arms, the legs, and whatever else they could find. And we’re just not willing to go down that road- especially when we know the outcome.”

For these reasons Kretek has decided not to support the new direction taken by the PCA. As a company, they wish success for the PCA and its membership. However, based on their direct experience with regulation in other parts of the world, they feel that the PCA’s desired outcome will not come to fruition. From observation and history, Kretek believes that standing united against any and all further regulation is the best chance the industry has for survival. Regulation is a game of inches, and the more we are willing to give up as an industry, the sooner those inches become miles.

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#### **About Kretek International, Inc.**

Kretek International, Inc., parent company to Phillips & King, Ventura Cigar Company, and Tobacco Media Group (TMG) is America’s number one importer, marketer, and distributor of specialty tobacco products sold by convenience, mass, and national retailers. For over 30 years, Kretek has enjoyed a strong reputation for providing exceptional customer relationships and top-quality brands. The company continues to offer standout brands like Djarum, Cuban Rounds, and Djeep lighters to distribution channels across the United States and Canada, bringing value, high margins, and growth to retailers and distributors.