Companies negotiating settlement, newspaper report says

would absolve the industry of liability for smoking-related health problems in return for the payments, which would be spread over 25 years, and an agreement to cut back on advertising, the newspaper said, citing unidentified sources familiar with the negotiations.

Although the companies, Philip Morris Cos. and RJR Nabisco, have in the past expressed interest in a possible settlement, the talks mark the first time they have actually discussed concessions once considered unthinkable, the newspaper said.

These include giving the Food and Drug Administration regulatory rights, banning all outdoor tobacco advertising, such as Joe Camel billboards, and ceasing to use pictures of people in ads, such as the Marlboro Man.

In return, the companies were asking for shelter from the growing number of liability lawsuits, although the mechanism would require an act of Congress.

At a shareholders meeting in Winston-Salem, N.C., today, RJR Nabisco officials declined comment.

Under the plan, the industry would establish a fund from which smokers could seek payments, but they would be barred from suing the cigarette companies.

Unresolved issues could still sink the talks, such as whether Congress would approve the deal, the Journal said.

But the negotiations bring together an unprecedented cast of characters, from Philip Morris chairman Geoffrey Bible to RJR Chairman Steven Goldstone to Deputy White House Counsel Bruce Lindsey, who has been monitoring the talks, the newspaper said.

The two cigarette executives also are representing two other tobacco companies in the talks, Loews Corp.'s Lorillard unit and B.A.T. Industries PLC's Brown & Williamson unit, the sources told the Journal.

On the other side of the table are four state attorneys general: Michael Moore of Mississippi, Grant Woods of Arizona, Robert Butterworth of Florida and Christine Gregoire of Washington.

Talks are being held in Washington and the attorneys general representing others states have been briefed about the proposal.

The negotiations come at a time when legal pressure on tobacco companies is intensifying at a rapid rate.

Bennett LeBow, the head of the Liggett Group, which makes Chesterfield, L&M and Lark cigarettes, recently broke ranks with the industry and agreed to settle cases against it by admitting smoking was addictive.

Annual Student Art Show opens Thursday at OU

Thursday marks the opening of the annual Student Art Show at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. At the same time, another important art show begins, this one run entirely by students.

The biannual Big Idea Visual Arts Collective Show coincides this year with the museum show. The theme for the show is “Living,” and it is geared toward non-traditional materials and techniques. Open to all OU students, the show is produced by the Big Idea student organization in conjunction with the Jacobson Foundation of Norman. The show will hang at the Jacobson House, which houses the foundation.

The Big Idea Visual Arts Collective is a student organization formed within the School of Art at OU to provide a forum for students to generate more awareness of student artwork in the community.

Each semester the Big Idea produces a show and selects one piece from it by open voting at the opening of the show to add to a permanent student collection. These works remain on permanent display at the Fred Jones Art Center.

Traci Tullius, treasurer for the collective and co-coordinator for the show says that the show “provides an opportunity for students to both experience the process of exhibiting their work, and provide an open forum for experimentation.”

This semester, the Big Idea has the cooperation of the Jacobson Foundation of Norman in their endeavor.

“We are enthusiastic,” Jacki Rand, executive director of the foundation said of the show. “Students are a major part of the community, and this provides us with an opportunity to develop that constituency.”

The Jacobson Foundation is an organization which seeks to create — through the legacy of Oscar Jacobson — a cross-cultural bridge with educational programs, exhibits and events, focusing on Native American art, but expanding in this case to include students.

The show opens Thursday with a reception open to the public from 6 to 8 p.m. The show will run through May 1. Jacobson House is located at the corner of Chautauqua and Boyd. For more information, call Lila Hays at 329-2535 or Jacki Rand at 366-1667.

Head Start sets training program

The Head Start Program of Action, Inc., will hold its first Parent Training Conference from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Friday at St. Stephen's United Methodist Church, 820 N. McGee.

Tom Kemper, executive director for the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, will deliver the keynote address from 9:15 to 9:45 a.m. Head Start workers hope to make this conference for parents and grandparents of Head Start students an annual event. For more information, contact Judi Welke or Lynn Garcia at 329-6079.