

NEWS RELEASE

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MINNESOTA PHYSICIANS SUPPORT STATEWIDE SMOKE-FREE LAW

MINNEAPOLIS - The Minnesota Medical Association (MMA), representing more than 11,000 physicians, strongly supports the Freedom to Breathe Act, which was introduced at a news conference today. The bill would require all workplaces including bars and restaurants, to be smoke-free. Senate authors include Sen. Kathy Sheran (DFL-Mankato) and Sen. Julie Rosen (R- Fairmont) and House authors include Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) and Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids).

“All Minnesotans have the right to breathe clean air in their workplace,” said G. Richard Geier, M.D., president of the MMA. “Whether they work in a bar, restaurant or office, all workers should be protected from the dangerous chemicals in secondhand smoke.”

The scientific evidence is clear. In June 2006, the Surgeon General stated conclusively that secondhand smoke causes death and disease in nonsmokers.

Secondhand smoke with its 250 poisons, including 11 cancer causing chemicals, causes lung cancer, heart disease and respiratory illness. More than 3,000 non smokers die each

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year from lung cancer and 46,000 more die from heart disease caused by secondhand smoke. Workers exposed to secondhand smoke have twice the number of heart attacks as those in a smoke-free environment. Other diseases caused or made worse by tobacco smoke include emphysema, asthma, and throat cancer.

The overwhelming majority of Minnesotans—81 percent—realize that secondhand smoke is dangerous to their health and 69 percent support a statewide smoke-free law that includes bars and restaurants, according to a recent survey by the American Cancer Society and ClearWay Minnesota. The survey shows support is broadly distributed across the population, regardless of geography, political and ideological affiliation, income, age or gender. (To view complete survey results, visit www.clearwaymn.org.)

More than 70 percent of residents in Minnesota communities that have already gone smoke free including Bloomington, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Mankato, Golden Valley, Beltrami County, Meeker County and Moorhead, support the policy.

“It’s time for lawmakers to listen to the people of Minnesota and provide the health protection they need and want,” said Geier. “This is the year to make sure all Minnesotans have freedom to breathe clean air.”