

Opposition emails to HB 40 – 4-2-2015 additions

Included:

Billie Longfellow

Jim Davis

Dear Paul Seaton,

I am writing to express my deep concern and opposition regarding HB 40 and SB 1 which would include the use of smoke-free vapor products (e-cigarettes) in Alaska's smoking law.

Smoking laws are ostensibly enacted to protect the public from the harm of secondhand smoke, but smoke-free e-cigarettes have not been shown to cause harm to bystanders. In fact, all evidence to date shows that the low health risks associated with e-cigarettes are comparable to other smokeless nicotine products. A comprehensive review conducted by Dr. Igor Burstyn of Drexel University School of Public Health (and published in a peer-reviewed journal earlier this year - <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/14/18/abstract>) examined over 9,000 observations of e-cigarette liquid and vapor and found "no apparent concern" for bystanders exposed to e-cigarette vapor, even under "worst case" assumptions about exposure.

Lawmakers must beware of unintended consequences from well-intentioned laws. There is clear evidence of a phenomenon called "accidental quitting," wherein many of the smokers who initially choose e-cigarettes to use just where smoking is prohibited go on to quit smoking conventional cigarettes completely. Prohibiting the use of e-cigarettes in public spaces completely eliminates that incentive to even try e-cigarettes. Unfortunately, the health risks of every one smoker who doesn't quit because e-cigarette use is prohibited (and the risks to the children and others who live with them) cumulatively outweigh any good done by eliminating the miniscule exposures to even hundreds of bystanders in public spaces.

Clearly, the benefits of allowing smokers to use e-cigarettes in public--and thereby increasing the likelihood of "accidental quitting" and reducing the known, extremely high health risks of smoking--outweigh the very low risks of insignificant exposures to bystanders. So, not only is there no genuine public health reason to prohibit e-cigarette use in public spaces, but, in fact, allowing e-cigarettes to be used in public spaces will actually improve public health by inspiring other smokers to switch and reduce their health risks by an estimated 99%. Moreover, private businesses in Alaska are already setting their own policies, and they should retain the right to allow or disallow usage since there is no proven health threat to bystanders.

While I understand some have expressed a fear about these products acting as a "gateway" to traditional cigarettes for youth, there is no evidence to suggest this is really happening, and research actually shows it is unlikely to happen to any substantial extent. Teen smoking rates are at their lowest point since smoking became popular and continue to drop, but there are adults who will continue to smoke until they die unless we provide attractive alternatives.

I urge you to oppose these bills and any legislation that would limit where smoke-free products like e-cigarettes can be used. It is imperative that existing adult smokers become aware of all the alternatives currently available and that access to these products remains unimpeded.

I look forward to your response on this issue. I, along with my fellow members of CASAA (Consumer Advocates for Smoke-free Alternatives Association), thank you for considering my comments and hope you will oppose misguided attempts to limit adult use of smoke-free e-cigarettes.

Sincerely,
Billie Longfellow

Dear Paul Seaton,

Honorable Alaska State Legislators,

Regarding Senate Bill 01 and House Bill 40, 2015 Session

I am a 63 year old father of a daughter who is a resident of Anchorage, and grandparent of a granddaughter living there as well. I am also a 47 year tobacco smoker who is 3 years abstinent due only to the availability and efficacy of e-cigarettes. During my 47 smoking years I failed to quit using most all of the “sanctioned” and “approved” cessation methods. Electronic cigarettes profoundly changed my life.

The proposed legislation SB 1 and HB 40 affects me personally with regard to my welcomeness in your State and more importantly, affects the approximately 162,000 current tobacco users in Alaska.(1 2)

I am OPPOSED to SB 1 and HB 40 for the following reasons:

1. Not all e-cigarettes contain nicotine. E-cigarettes that do contain nicotine do not contain tobacco and their vapor (or aerosol, if you prefer) is not smoke(3 4 5).
2. The judgment of harm from e-cigarettes is premature and unwarranted by current research (6).
3. Language in legislation equating E-Cigarettes to Smoking sends an inaccurate, disingenuous, and harmful message to the public. At a minimum, e-cigarettes provide a previously unavailable and unique opportunity for cessation (7) and/or harm reduction for the 162,000 current smokers, and the associated public health benefit (8 9 10).
4. For those that use nicotine for any of it's established benefits (11 12 13 14), and for those like myself who wish to use it in a vastly harm-reduced (15 16 17 18) yet effective (7 19) delivery vehicle, prohibitions equal to that of smoking will undoubtedly have unconscionable future effects (20 21).

While a complete prohibition of e-cigarette use in public spaces is an easy answer to potential yet unestablished public harm, bystander objections, and is effective in the (in my opinion, misguided) continuation of tobacco “denormalization”, I urge you to weigh the potential public good that can be served by accepting e-cigarette benefits and seek a common sense balance for all concerned.

Should you still consider some type of public prohibition, I urge you to adopt an exemption that considers both non-users and users by allowing e-cigarette use in venues that post required “E-Cigarettes Allowed” signage. This simple solution should accommodate all parties concerned, especially if such venues are age restricted unless with parent or guardian approval or attendance.

Respectfully,
Jim Davis
Silver Spring, MD

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Respectfully
Jim Davis