



# Alaska Smoke-Free Indoor Workplaces

Only half of Alaska’s population is covered by a current smoke-free workplace law. A statewide smoke-free indoor workplaces law would update existing Alaska state law to provide comprehensive protection from secondhand smoke for employees and customers in all enclosed workplaces and places of public accommodation.

This law would prohibit smoking in all indoor workplaces, businesses and public spaces. It would require that those who choose to smoke “take it outside” in order to better protect the health and safety of all workers, patrons and visitors from the disease and premature death caused by secondhand smoke. No one should have to choose between their health and a good job. Due to limitations in local authority, it is time for a statewide law.

A statewide law would create a standard with regard to secondhand smoke that puts all businesses and workplaces across Alaska on a level playing field.

## Everyone has the right to breathe smoke-free air.

### Smoke-Free Laws Save Lives

There is conclusive scientific evidence that secondhand smoke causes heart disease.

- Studies of at least 10 communities published in peer-reviewed journals have proven a decrease in heart attack incidence after the implementation of smoke-free laws.<sup>2</sup>
- Helena, MT enjoyed a 40% decrease in heart attacks among Helena residents while smoke-free laws were in place.<sup>2</sup>
- Heart attack hospitalizations fell by 41% in Pueblo, CO after a comprehensive smoke-free law was enacted. This decrease was sustained over a three-year-period.<sup>2</sup>

### Anchorage Experiences

#### Smoke-Free Laws Benefit Businesses

Using employment data on Anchorage bars from 2001 to 2010, a report commissioned by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (2011) found:

Bar employment within the Municipality was 10% higher than it would have been if the smoke-free law had not been implemented.

The Institute of Social and Economic Research interviewed representatives of 50 full-service restaurants and bars in Anchorage on their perceptions of the impact of the smoke free indoor ordinance.

- 76% of restaurant and bars reported very positive or somewhat positive feedback from customers and employees.
- A total of 96% (48/50) of surveyed full-service restaurant and bar representatives identified at least one benefit from the passage of the smoke-free ordinances in Anchorage.
- Most respondents identified a cleaner environment, increased customer and employee satisfaction, improved employee health, more new customers, and lower maintenance costs as benefits of a smoke-free Anchorage.



## Alaskans strongly support smoke-free indoor workplaces.

- 4 in 5 Alaska adults support smoke-free workplaces.<sup>4</sup>
- Support for smoke-free indoor workplaces includes a strong majority of current smokers (59%) as well as former smokers (80%).<sup>4</sup>
- Alaskan support for smoke-free indoor workplaces is high throughout all regions of the state, ranging from 75% to 84%.<sup>4</sup>



## The Need for Legislation

- Secondhand smoke is a major cause of needless, preventable death, causing or worsening a wide range of adverse health effects, including lung cancer, heart disease, respiratory infections, and asthma. Most significantly, it has been shown that even brief exposure can be dangerous.<sup>1</sup>
- Non-smokers exposed to secondhand smoke increase their risk of heart disease and lung cancer by up to 30 percent.<sup>1</sup>
- The U.S. Surgeon General's Report, "The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke," (2006) concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke; ventilation and other air cleaning technologies cannot eliminate exposure of nonsmokers to secondhand smoke; and that comprehensive smoke-free workplace policies are the only effective way to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure in the workplace<sup>1</sup>
- Published research in communities before and after adoption of comprehensive smoke-free workplace laws has documented a significant decline in heart disease-related hospital admissions.<sup>2</sup>

## Sources:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, **The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General**, HHS, CDC, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.
2. Institute of Medicine (IOM), *Secondhand Smoke Exposure and Cardiovascular Effects: Making Sense of the Evidence*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2009
3. Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, *The Impact of Anchorage's 2000 and 2007 Smoke-free Policies on Select Restaurants and Bars*, 2014.
4. Alaska Tobacco Facts, Update 2013 [http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Documents/Tobacco/PDF/2013\\_alaska\\_tobacco\\_facts.pdf](http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Documents/Tobacco/PDF/2013_alaska_tobacco_facts.pdf)

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