



Legislative Update

May 12, 2008

Please read and forward to your colleagues and networks!

2008 General Assembly Session Begins Tomorrow

The 2008 session of the General Assembly convenes Tuesday, May 13. Because it will be a “short” session, legislators will focus primarily on making adjustments to the state budget. Legislative leaders have stated repeatedly that they intend to keep the short session “short” and do not anticipate taking up significant or controversial policy issues. The Alliance does not expect to see movement of a statewide, comprehensive bill to prohibit smoking in worksites and public places (including restaurants). However, we do expect to see action on several incremental secondhand smoke bills this session.

This session will also see the Alliance move proactively to promote several bills addressing North Carolina’s growing obesity epidemic. It promises to be an active session with both tobacco and obesity policy efforts and we will need YOUR help to make sure legislators know of the broad public support for these policy changes.

NC Alliance for Health 2008 Policy Priorities

2008 Tobacco-Use Prevention Policy Priorities:

- Long Term Goal: Protect public health by eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke.
 - Advocate for legislation that would make all NC worksites and public places 100% smoke-free.
 - Overturn Preemption: Advocate for legislation that restores authority to local decision-makers to pass measures protecting the public from exposure to secondhand smoke in their communities.
- Short Term secondhand smoke policy goals for the 2008 short session:
 - Require all vehicles owned and operated by the state be 100% smoke-free and clarify local governments have authority to make vehicles owned and operated by local governments 100% smoke-free;
 - Establish a 100% tobacco-free perimeter around all state government buildings and grant authority to local governments to implement and enforce 100% tobacco-free perimeters around local government buildings; and,
 - Grant community colleges the clear authority to prohibit smoking on the grounds of community college campuses.
- Support an increase in North Carolina’s cigarette excise tax BY at least 75 cents. *(NOTE: Today the Governor’s budget was released and includes a proposed 20 cent increase in the cigarette tax (from 35 to 55 cents) to fund public school teacher raises that would average 7 percent. A 20 cent increase does not meet the 10% price increase cited by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as the minimum increase required to change behavior in a meaningful and measurable way.)*

2008 Obesity Prevention Policy Priorities:

- Establish statewide “quality” physical education standards in NC’s Basic Education Program;
- Fund baseline childhood obesity data collection; and,
- Implement and fully fund Child Nutrition Standards for grades K – 5.

Alliance Promotes Statewide Quality Physical Education Standards

North Carolina is experiencing an obesity epidemic, particularly among our children, that is touching all ethnicities, socio-economic groups and regions of the state. According to the Trust for America’s Health, North Carolina has the 5th highest rate of overweight and obese children age 10 – 17 (19.3% of NC’s children in this age group) and ranks as the 17th most obese state in the nation.

Utilizing the existing structure and governance of our public schools is one of the most efficient ways to reach our children and begin to change unhealthy behaviors. It is the unique role of quality physical education programs in the schools to help all students develop health-related fitness, physical competence, cognitive understanding, and positive attitudes about physical activity so that they can adopt healthy, active lifestyles that will last a lifetime. Quality physical education programs are also important because they provide learning experiences that meet youngsters’ developmental needs, which in turn helps to improve their mental alertness, academic performance, and readiness and enthusiasm for learning.

The first step to improving physical activity in North Carolina’s public schools is to define exactly what is meant by a “quality” physical education (PE). The Alliance is seeking to establish “quality” PE standards in state law (the Basic Education Program) based on national standards developed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE). To view these proposed standards, please go to this link on the Alliance website: [http://www.rtpnet.org/alliance/pdfs/5-08 PE Bill Text Proposed.pdf](http://www.rtpnet.org/alliance/pdfs/5-08_PE_Bill_Text_Proposed.pdf)

Please help the Alliance educate legislators about the growing childhood obesity epidemic in our state and the need for quality physical education that will teach children life-long healthy habits. To assist with the effort to promote quality PE standards for our public schools:

- 1) **Sign the Alliance’s PE resolution to show your support for quality PE in schools. Go to the Alliance website at: <http://www.ncallianceforhealth.org/2008PEResolution.html> The website is capable to taking signatures directly on–line.**
- 2) **As legislators return to Raleigh this week, please call or email your legislators with the message that children need a quality PE program in the schools to keep them healthy.**

Tell Your Legislators Kids Need Quality PE to Keep Them Healthy

Sample Message:

Dear (Name of Legislator),

As a state legislator, you have a crucial role to play in enhancing physical education in North Carolina’s schools. The childhood obesity epidemic is so serious that health care experts frequently predict that today’s children may actually have shorter life expectancies than their parents.

We all know that overweight children are at greater risk for a host of serious ailments when they grow up. But with kids being diagnosed with “adult” diseases like hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes, obesity is clearly affecting children’s health right now.

Physical education is one of the most important and cost-effective steps we can take to keep our kids healthy. I urge you to protect the health and well-being of North Carolina's young people by ensuring quality physical education is successfully implemented in North Carolina schools.

Sincerely,
Your Name

How to Contact Your Legislators

CALL:

To call your Representative or Senator, please call 919-733-4111 and ask for your legislator by name to be transferred.

E-MAIL:

If you are not sure of the name of your representative or senator, check the General Assembly's website at: http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/GIS/Representation/Who_Represents_Me/Who_Represents_Me.html

To email your representative, go to this link for your member's email address:

<http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/gascripts/members/reports/room-phone.pl?Chamber=House&viewType=normal>

To email your senator, go to this link for your senator's email address:

<http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/gascripts/members/reports/room-phone.pl?Chamber=Senate&viewType=normal>

**For additional information about the Alliance, please contact
Alliance Executive Director Pam Seamans at pamseamans@nc.rr.com;
or Alliance Program Director Charlotte Ranz at cran@mindspring.com.**

What *MORE* can you do to promote the secondhand smoke issue?

Have your organization, its board members, staff and volunteers sign the Alliance's secondhand smoke resolution to demonstrate your support for making NC's worksites and public places smoke-free. Access the resolution by going to the Alliance's website at:

<http://www.ncallianceforhealth.org/resolution.html>

Also available on our website are fact sheets, talking points and other resources on secondhand smoke and the cigarette tax.

**For additional information, go to
www.ncallianceforhealth.org
for talking points and other resources.**

Call 919-463-8328
or e-mail ncalliance@heart.org for more information