



Support SB 1681 Make State Government Motor Fleets Smoke-Free

June 2008

SB 1681 protects state workers and passengers by making all vehicles owned, operated and leased by the state smoke-free, and clarifies local government authority to make local government owned, operated and leased vehicles smoke-free.

Making State Government Vehicles Smoke-Free Makes Sense

- The State is one of the largest employers in North Carolina, and has a responsibility to offer its employees a safe and risk-free work place. State vehicles are an integral part of the state employee work environment. Making all state owned, operated and leased vehicles smoke-free extends the protection of state employees from the dangers of secondhand smoke.
- Prohibiting smoking in state vehicles would save cleaning costs and preserve the value of state assets.
- According to a September 2006 Elon University poll, 86 percent of respondents said that they agree or strongly agree that employees in North Carolina should be able to work in a smoke-free environment.
- Effective January 2007, the Commonwealth of Virginia prohibited smoking in state-owned vehicles based on the rationale of protecting employee health and preserving the value of state assets.¹

Local Communities Deserve the Right to Regulate Smoking in their Communities

- Since 1993, local communities in North Carolina have been restricted from passing their own ordinances and rules to protect their communities from exposure to secondhand smoke. Local elected officials understand best the unique characteristics and needs of their communities and should have the flexibility to decide whether their communities need additional regulation of smoking.
- Many local governments have already taken steps to make local government motor fleets smoke-free; this bill simply clarifies that authority.
- Following the July 2007 passage of HB 24 (S.L.2007-193), approximately 200 officials from local governments have requested information on passing smoke-free regulations, demonstrating demand exists for this authority. As of October 2007, data show local health departments covering 78 counties and local social services covering 33 counties have prohibited smoking on grounds, up to 50 ft from the buildings.²

Secondhand Smoke is Harmful to Health

- **According to the US Surgeon General, there is NO safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.** The 2006 Surgeon General's Report on the Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Secondhand Smoke found that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke.³
- **As little as thirty minutes of exposure can trigger a heart attack in someone with heart disease or risk factors for heart disease.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warns, "...all patients at risk of coronary heart disease or with known coronary artery disease should be advised to avoid all indoor environments that permit smoking."⁴

State and local employees deserve to breathe smoke-free air working in the office and in government-controlled cars.

Vote YES on SB1681

For more information, contact NC Alliance for Health at ncalliance@heart.org; 919-463-8328

References:

- ¹ Executive Order 41--Banning smoking in State Offices and Vehicles, October 2006. Downloaded June 2, 2008 at: http://www.governor.virginia.gov/Initiatives/ExecutiveOrders/pdf/EO_41.pdf
Upon signing the Executive Order, Governor Kaine stated, "Protecting employee health and preserving the value of state assets suggests the need to limit smoking in state vehicles."
- ² NC Department of Health and Human Services, Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch, May 2008.
- ³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General—Executive Summary*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006
- ⁴ Pechacek, TF and Babb, S *How acute and reversible are the cardiovascular risks of secondhand smoke?* BMJ. 2004 Apr 24;328(7446):980-3.