



## Legislative Update & ACTION ALERT!

April 17, 2007

*Please read and forward to your colleagues and networks!*

### **House Judiciary Cmte Passes HB 259; Floor Vote Expected Week of April 23 Call House Members This Week!**

Today the House Judiciary 1 Committee approved by voice vote a new, more narrowly drafted version of HB 259, sponsored by House Majority Leader Rep. Hugh Holliman (D-Davidson). In its new form, HB 259:

- Prohibits smoking in enclosed areas of restaurants and most bars. Establishments that hold mixed beverage permits *and* at all times only admit adults 21 and older are exempted from the law;
- Prohibits smoking in lodging facilities with the exception of designated smoking guest rooms. No more than 20% of a lodging establishment's guest rooms may be designated as smoking rooms;
- Prohibits smoking in all state government buildings (similar to HB 24, sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Weiss, and already passed by the House);
- Restores local control to local governments so that they may adopt and enforce more restrictive smoking policies in both worksites (including local government buildings and local transportation systems) and public places in their local communities.

The North Carolina Alliance for Health supports HB 259 in its new form because it will protect all state government workers and a majority of NC restaurant workers and patrons from the dangerous effects of secondhand smoke. The bill also restores local control (allowing local communities to decide whether they want to restrict smoking beyond just restaurants and most bars). HB 259 is expected to be considered by the full House early next week (week of April 23).

**It is critical that advocates communicate their support for HB 259 to ALL HOUSE MEMBERS this week and early next week. The importance of this vote cannot be overstated: If HB 259 were to fail, it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to address secondhand smoke issues in either chamber for the remainder of the legislative biennium (until Jan 2009). Therefore it is imperative that we communicate our support for this bill and make sure House members understand that broad public support exists in NC for smoking restrictions. We realize many advocates have already called or emailed their House member about HB 259. However, we ask that you call your representative ONE MORE TIME to urge their support for the new version of HB 259 which will prohibit smoking in food and lodging**

**facilities, in state government buildings and restore local control so that local governments can pass their own local smoking restrictions. (Please thank HB 259 co-sponsors for their support and leadership on this issue.)**

## **Contact Your House Member THIS Week!**

To contact your House member, use the table listing emails and phone numbers at the bottom of this message. You may also call 919-733-411 and ask for your legislator by name to be transferred.

If you are not sure of the name of your representative, check the General Assembly's website at: [http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/GIS/Representation/Who\\_Represents\\_Me/Who\\_Represents\\_Me.htm](http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/GIS/Representation/Who_Represents_Me/Who_Represents_Me.htm)  
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**Legislators should support HB 259 because:**

### **Secondhand Smoke Kills.**

- According to the US Surgeon General, there is NO safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.
- HB 259 will protect all state government employees and a majority of NC restaurants workers from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

### **Local Communities Deserve the Right to Decide How to Regulate Smoking in Their Communities.**

- 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.
- HB 259 would give local governments the authority to adopt and enforce more restrictive smoking policies in both worksites and public places (including local government buildings and local transportation systems).

### **North Carolina Citizens Support Smoke-Free Policies.** According to an Elon poll (Sept. 06):

- 86% of North Carolinians agree or strongly agree that employees in North Carolina should be able to work in a smoke-free environment;
- 64.7% of respondents support or strongly support a law in NC that would prohibit smoking in restaurants & bars;
- 79.2% agree that restaurant employees in NC should be able to work in a smoke-free environment.

### **Smoke-Free Policies are Good for Business.**

- No rigorous, scientifically conducted study has found negative economic impact from smoke-free policies; some, in fact, have found an increase in restaurant and bar sales following local or statewide restrictions on smoking in public places.
- The EPA estimates that smoke-free restaurants can expect to save about \$190 per 1,000 square feet each year in lower cleaning and maintenance costs.

### **Smoke-Free Policies Save Health Care Costs.**

- Most smokers want to quit and smoke-free policies help smokers quit smoking.
- Smoking costs in North Carolina are \$2.46 billion in direct medical costs. Smoking-attributable health care costs to the Medicaid Program are \$769 million annually.

For a full set of talking points about the dangers of secondhand smoke and HB 259 (along with source citations), go to the Alliance website:

<http://www.ncallianceforhealth.org/pdfs/HB259TalkingPoints3-07.pdf>

For talking points on the economic impact of secondhand smoke policies:

<http://www.rtpnet.org/alliance/pdfs/HB259TalkingPtsEcon3-07.pdf>

For talking points listing common business regulations that protect workers and why secondhand smoke should be regulated too:

<http://www.rtpnet.org/alliance/pdfs/HB259TalkingPtsBusinessRegs3-07.pdf>

At distribution time, the General Assembly website had not been updated to include the new version of HB 259. It should be posted by the end of the day. To view HB 259, go to:

<http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/BillLookUp/BillLookUp.pl?Session=2007&BillID=HB+259>

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**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.rtpnet.org/alliance/resolution.html>

The website is now capable to taking signatures directly on-line. Also available on our website are fact sheets, talking points and other resources on secondhand smoke and the cigarette tax.

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**For additional information about secondhand smoke issues or NC's cigarette tax, access the Alliance website at [www.ncallianceforhealth.org](http://www.ncallianceforhealth.org) for talking points and other resources.**

Call 919-463-8328  
or e-mail [ncalliance@heart.org](mailto:ncalliance@heart.org) for more information