

Smokefree Alabama

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States.¹ Smoking not only claims the lives of those who use tobacco, but also those who are exposed to second-hand smoke.

Adopting strong smokefree policies are the only effective way to completely eliminate the health threat of exposure to secondhand smoke. Mounting evidence shows that smokefree workplace laws are also an effective tool in the fight against heart disease. A scientific review of several studies showed a 6 percent to 47 percent reduction in the rate of heart attacks after implementation of comprehensive smokefree policies.²

- Exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of coronary heart disease by 25 to 30%.²
- Each year, primarily because of exposure to secondhand smoke, an estimated 3,000 nonsmoking Americans die of lung cancer, more than 46,000 die of heart disease, and about 150,000–300,000 children younger than 18 months have lower respiratory tract infections.¹
- Each year, more than 800 Alabamians die from the effects of secondhand smoke.³
- According to the U.S. Surgeon General, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Even brief exposure can cause immediate harm.⁴
- Nearly 80% of Alabamians do not smoke.⁵

Alabamians favor smokefree policies. In 2008, a survey commissioned by the American Cancer Society, showed 78% of Alabama voters support a law that would make all Alabama workplaces smokefree. Ninety-five percent of Alabamians believe secondhand smoke poses a health risk and 79% of likely voters believe elected officials have a responsibility to protect public health. In 2011, a poll conducted in Jefferson County, showed similar results with 76% of voters in the county strongly favoring a comprehensive smokefree law.

Smokefree policies are not only good for health, but also good for business. The hospitality and tobacco industries often promote the idea that business will suffer after these laws are passed. The results of all credible peer-reviewed studies show that smokefree policies and regulations do not have a negative impact on business revenues.⁶ In fact, a review of case studies shows business sales in many states and municipalities increased subsequent to passage of a smokefree policy.⁷

The savings in health care costs also begin to add up. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, estimated the net health savings of eliminating secondhand smoke in all indoor workplaces (from reducing premature deaths and tobacco-related illness) to be between \$35 and \$66 billion a year.⁸ Furthermore, if all workplaces



were to implement 100% smokefree policies, the reduction in heart attack rates due to exposure to secondhand smoke would save the U.S. \$49 million in direct medical savings within the first year alone.⁹



Many states around the country view secondhand smoke as a serious public health issue and have stepped up to protect their citizens. Currently, a total of 23 states, along with Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Washington D.C., have a law in effect that requires non-hospitality workplaces, restaurants, and bars to be 100% smokefree.¹⁰

The American Heart Association recommends:

- Smokefree air laws that are comprehensive and apply to all workplaces and public environments.
- No exemptions for hardship, opting out, or ventilation.
- No exemptions for casinos and gaming organizations, bars or private clubs.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/AAG/osh.htm>.
2. Institute of Medicine. *Secondhand Smoke Exposure and Cardiovascular Effects: Making Sense of the Evidence*; SBN: 978-0-309-13839-0, 220 pages, 6 x 9, paperback (2009).
3. Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, *The Toll of Tobacco in Alabama*, http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/alabama.
4. Americans for Nonsmokers Rights, *Secondhand Smoke: The Science* <http://no-smoke.org/document.php?id=215>.
5. Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/alabama
6. 2006 Surgeon General's Report on The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke.
7. Americans for Nonsmokers Rights. *Economic Impact of Smokefree Laws: Case Studies*, May 2005. <http://www.no-smoke.org/document.php?id=210>
8. United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (1994). *The Costs and Benefits of Smoking Restrictions: An Assessment of the Smoke-Free Environmental Act of 1993 (H.R. 3434)*. Office of Air and Radiation. Washington, D.C.: U.S. EPA.
9. Americans for Nonsmokers Rights, *Economic Impact of Legislation*, <http://no-smoke.org/document.php?id=219>.
10. Americans for Nonsmokers Rights, *Smokefree Lists, Maps, and Data*, <http://www.no-smoke.org/pdf/SummaryUSPopList.pdf>