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**Health Organizations Demonstrate Success of
Smoke Free Illinois Act and Ask Lawmakers to Preserve It**
*Studies show Illinoisans are healthier since Smoke Free Illinois began,
saving the state more than a billion dollars in healthcare costs.*

Springfield, Ill. (March 30, 2011) – Supporters of the Smoke Free Illinois Act gathered at the Illinois State Capitol today to share research with lawmakers that proves that smoke-free laws have improved the health of Illinoisans. People in Illinois aren't being hospitalized for tobacco-related diseases at the rate they were before the Smoke Free Illinois Act was instituted in 2008, and the state is saving more than \$1 billion in health care costs.

Yesterday the House passed HB1965, which would allow smoking in Illinois gaming facilities again. Next they will review two other bills that would deteriorate the purpose of the Smoke Free Illinois Act. These bills include:

- House Bill 1310 – Would allow liquor commissions to sell smoking licenses to bars, private clubs, casinos and other establishments.
- House Bill 171 – Would allow designated, separated smoking areas in casinos.

“Secondhand smoke is the third leading cause of *preventable* death in America. About 2,100 people are dying annually in Illinois due to exposure to secondhand smoke,” emphasized Thomas Robbins, M.D., first vice president of the Illinois Division of the American Cancer Society and Director of the Simmons Cancer Institute at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. “The American Cancer Society believes that Illinoisans deserve to breathe clean air, free of the cancer-causing poisons known to exist in secondhand smoke. Smoke-Free laws reduce health care spending, improve employee productivity and encourage smokers to quit. We must stay focused on saving lives and keeping Smoke Free Illinois strong.”

The summary of the research presented with the reduction of hospitalizations since the Smoke Free Illinois Act is the following:

Type of Hospitalization for Known Tobacco-Related Heart Conditions	Percentage Decrease	Estimated number of prevented hospitalizations	Healthcare Cost Savings
Heart Disease TOTAL	9.3%	30,240	\$1.18 billion
Heart Attacks	4.4%	1,344	\$83.9 million
Congestive Heart Failure	7.8%	6,008	\$195.3 million
Coronary (ischemic) heart disease	20.8%	15,382	\$859 million
Other heart disease including angina and chest pain	5.9%	7,512	\$37.7 million

Smoke-free laws are good for business and good for health. A study performed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services shows that businesses face additional costs of \$1,300 per year for each employee who smokes due to higher health insurance claims and costs, plus maintenance and cleaning costs for furniture, drapery and carpeting.

“Make no mistake, if the legislature strips away our protection from secondhand smoke, we’ll see more heart attacks, more cardiovascular disease, and more people racking up hospital bills instead of living healthy, productive lives,” said Edward Winslow, MD, MBA, cardiologist, business consultant, and American Heart Association representative.

It is important to remember that there is more than meets the eye for casino revenue in the state.

“The Illinois casinos that say they are losing money because of the smoking ban are not taking all of the factors into account, including the economy and the fact that our neighboring states have newer, nicer gaming facilities,” said Kathy Drea, Vice President of Advocacy for the American Lung Association in Illinois. “Iowa, Missouri and Wisconsin have more casinos with amenities such as restaurants, hotels, conference centers and more. These factors strongly affect the revenue numbers that are reported.”

Media note: Please see attachment for comparison information on Illinois, Iowa and Missouri casinos.

Smoke Free Illinois has received an influx of calls from casino workers who are concerned about these bills getting passed and being forced to breathe in secondhand smoke in the workplace again. Luckily, some legislators are advocating for laws that will protect their health at work.

““Though I was not a legislator at the time Smoke Free Illinois was passed, this law is just as important today as it was a few years ago,” said State Representative Ann Williams. “Casino workers are very fearful that these important protections will be rolled back, returning them to a workplace where they are exposed to hours of heavy secondhand smoke. All workers, whether they work in a casino, restaurant or office, deserve protection from the dangers of secondhand smoke.”

Smoke Free Illinois supporters reiterated that this law is a good law for public health in Illinois. “The smoke-free law will save more lives than seat belts,” said Matt Maloney, Director of Health Policy at the Respiratory Health Association. “This is a matter of public health and absolutely should not be repealed or weakened. We can’t create a second class of workers who are not protected by the law.”

“Nothing has changed since the Smoke Free Illinois Act was implemented 2 years ago,” says Janet Williams, co-chair, Illinois Coalition Against Tobacco who compiled the attached heart disease data. “There is still no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. More than 30,000 heart attacks and other heart related hospitalizations have been prevented as a result of the Act, and we cannot afford to go backwards and put people at risk.”

Jim Nelson, Executive Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health added, “In the field of Public Health, there is no better example of the effectiveness of prevention than the positive impact of our comprehensive ban on secondhand smoke; it must be preserved.”

For more information go to smokefreeillinois.org.

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