

# Freedom to Breathe

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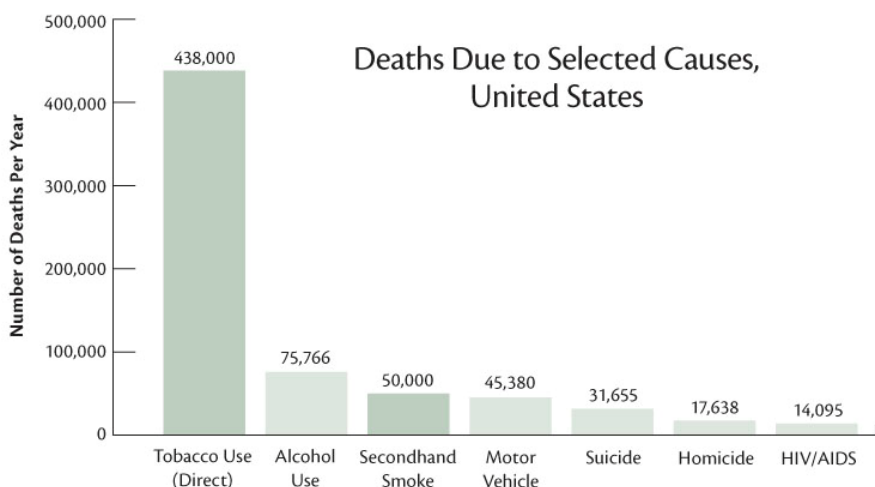
The Case for  
Smokefree Workplaces  
in Anchorage



## Summary

- Secondhand smoke is a leading cause of preventable death, accounting for an estimated 50,000 deaths per year in the United States. In Alaska, there are approximately 120 secondhand smoke-caused deaths per year -- more than motor vehicle accidents and about three times as many as homicide.
- The American Society of Heating Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) has concluded that complete indoor smoking bans are the only effective means of controlling the health harms from secondhand smoke.
- Over the past decade, hundreds of local communities have led efforts to protect health by adopting smokefree laws. More recently, fourteen states and several entire countries have enacted comprehensive laws to make all workplaces smokefree, including restaurants and bars.
- Research on the economic effect of indoor smoking bans shows these laws do not harm the economy and predictably have a neutral or positive effect on the hospitality/tourism industry. These findings are consistent with the Anchorage experience following adoption of the clean indoor air law in 2000 that extended the indoor smoking ban to restaurants.
- There is overwhelming public support among Anchorage voters for a comprehensive smokefree law covering all workplaces and this includes a substantial portion of current smokers.

1. **A leading cause of preventable death.** Secondhand smoke is a leading cause of preventable death. The lethal and chronic health effects of secondhand smoke have been extensively documented by numerous scientific and public health authorities including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency<sup>1</sup>, the National Research Council<sup>2,3</sup>, the California Environmental Protection Agency<sup>4</sup>, the U.S. Surgeon General<sup>5</sup>, the National Toxicology Program<sup>6</sup> and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.<sup>7</sup>



Sources: National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2005; Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, CDC 2004 Vol. 53 & 2005 Vol. 54; California Environmental Protection Agency 2005

An estimated 50,000 people die each year in the United States from a variety of secondhand smoke-caused illnesses that include heart disease and multiple forms of cancer.<sup>8</sup> In Alaska, there are approximately 120 secondhand smoke-caused deaths per year, somewhat more than motor vehicle accidents (110) and approximately three times the number of deaths caused by homicide (42).<sup>9</sup>

Workers in the hospitality industry and other occupational settings where smoking is allowed are especially vulnerable to secondhand smoke-caused disease and premature death. Exposure to secondhand smoke causes heart disease and significantly increases the risk of heart attack. The effects of even brief (minutes to hours) “passive smoking” are often nearly as large (average 80% to 90%) as chronic active smoking.<sup>10</sup> Smokefree laws have been shown to substantially reduce heart attacks. Studies in Helena, Montana, and Pueblo, Colorado, following adoption of clean indoor air laws documented large declines in the number of heart attacks. In Pueblo, Colorado, there was a 27% drop in heart attacks and in Helena, Montana, the heart attacks declined 40%.<sup>11,12</sup>

Secondhand smoke-caused health harms also include developmental effects -- low birth weight, pre-term delivery and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

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#### HEALTH EFFECTS Caused by Secondhand Smoke

##### **Carcinogenic Effects**

- Lung cancer
- Nasal sinus cancer
- Breast cancer in younger, primarily pre-menopausal women

##### **Cardiovascular Effects**

- Heart disease mortality (heart attacks)
- Acute and chronic coronary heart disease morbidity
- Altered vascular properties

##### **Developmental Effects**

- Fetal growth: Low birth weight and decrease in birth weights
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Pre-term delivery

##### **Respiratory Effects**

- Asthma induction in adults and children
- Acute lower respiratory tract infections in children (e.g., bronchitis and pneumonia)
- Chronic respiratory symptoms in children
- Eye and nasal irritation in children

California Environmental Protection Agency. June 2005. Executive Summary as Approved by the Scientific Review Panel, *Proposed Identification of Environmental Tobacco Smoke as a Toxic Air Contaminant*. Table ES.1

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2. **Ventilation does not protect health.** The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) has concluded that smoking bans “are the only effective control method” to eliminate the health risk from secondhand smoke:

“No other engineering approaches, including current and advanced dilution ventilation or air cleaning technologies have been demonstrated or should be relied upon to control health risks from [secondhand smoke] exposure in spaces where smoking occurs.”<sup>13</sup>

3. **Local communities lead the way.** Over the past decade, local communities across the nation have led efforts to prevent secondhand smoke-caused disease and death by adoption of clean indoor air ordinances. In addition to more than two hundred local governments, 14 states (Montana, Colorado, Utah, New Jersey, Washington, Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine, Connecticut, New York, Delaware, California, Hawaii) have enacted workplace smoking bans including restaurants and bars.

Worldwide, a growing number of countries are taking action to adopt comprehensive workplace smoking bans. Ireland, England, Scotland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Spain and New Zealand as well as nine of thirteen Canadian Provinces have enacted smoking bans that include restaurants and bars.

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**COMPREHENSIVE SMOKEFREE WORKPLACE LAWS IN U.S. STATES**  
Workplaces, Restaurants and Bars

	Smokefree Offices	Smokefree Restaurants	Smokefree Bars
Colorado	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Jersey	Yes	Yes	Yes
Washington	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vermont	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rhode Island	Yes	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maine	Yes	Yes	Yes
Connecticut	Yes	Yes	Yes
New York	Yes	Yes	Yes
Delaware	Yes	Yes	Yes
California	Yes	Yes	Yes
Montana	Yes	Yes	Yes *
Utah	Yes	Yes	Yes *
Hawaii	Yes	Yes	Yes

\* effective 2009

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4. **Smoking bans do not hurt the economy.** The experience is clear regarding economic impacts – smokefree laws protect health without harming the hospitality or tourism industries. While opponents of smokefree laws routinely claim that smokefree laws damage the economy, a comprehensive review of all available studies on the economic impact of smokefree workplace laws found that this is not the case when

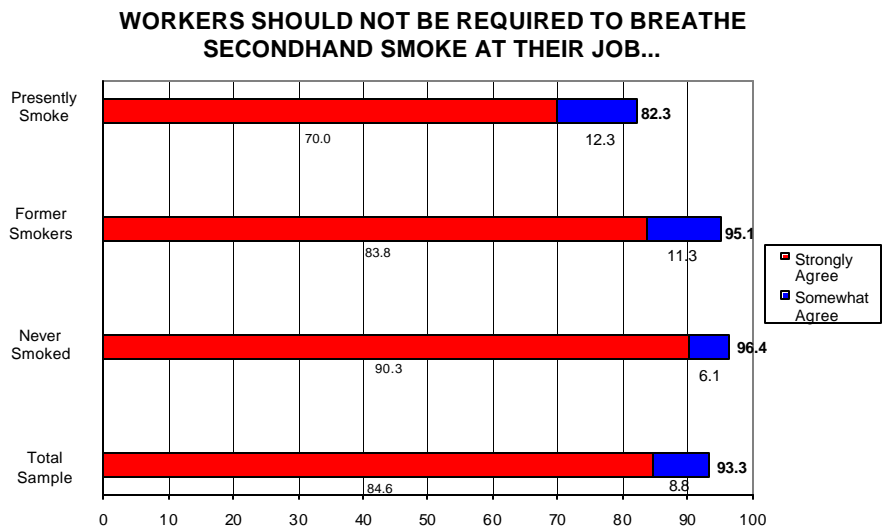
studies are based on objective and verifiable pre/post data (e.g., sales tax data, employment, etc.) rather than on conjecture, subjective opinion or speculative projection.

“All of the best designed studies report no impact or a positive impact of smokefree restaurant and bar laws on sales and employment. Policymakers can act to protect workers and patrons from the toxins in secondhand smoke confident in rejecting industry claims that there will be an adverse economic impact.”<sup>14</sup>

This finding is consistent with the Anchorage experience following passage of the municipality’s current smokefree ordinance in 2000 which extended clean indoor air requirements to restaurants. An assessment of economic impact conducted by the University of Alaska found no evidence of economic harm.<sup>15</sup>

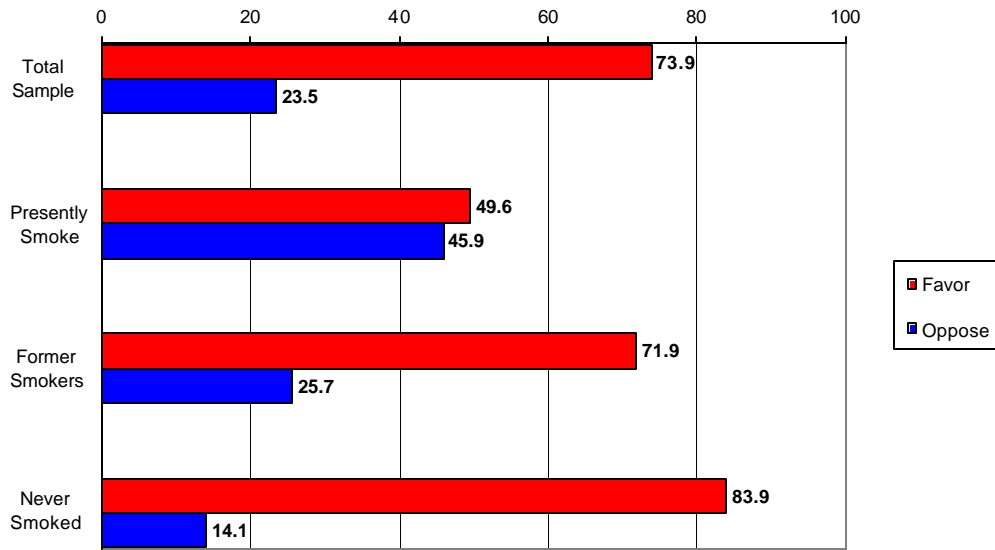
**5. Anchorage voters overwhelmingly support an indoor smoking ban.** Anchorage residents strongly support smokefree workplaces (Hellenthal & Associates).<sup>16</sup>

- Anchorage residents agree that “workers should not be required to breathe secondhand smoke at their job” -- 93% overall and 82% of current smokers.
- Anchorage residents support the Anchorage Assembly making all workplaces smokefree -- 74% overall and approximately half of current smokers.
- Consistent with experience in other smokefree communities, the Anchorage survey results also indicate that the hospitality industry should actually benefit from a comprehensive smokefree workplace ordinance because approximately 2-3 times as many people indicate they would go out *more often* as compared to those who might go out less often if Anchorage bars were smokefree. This finding holds true across various categories of bar patronage.



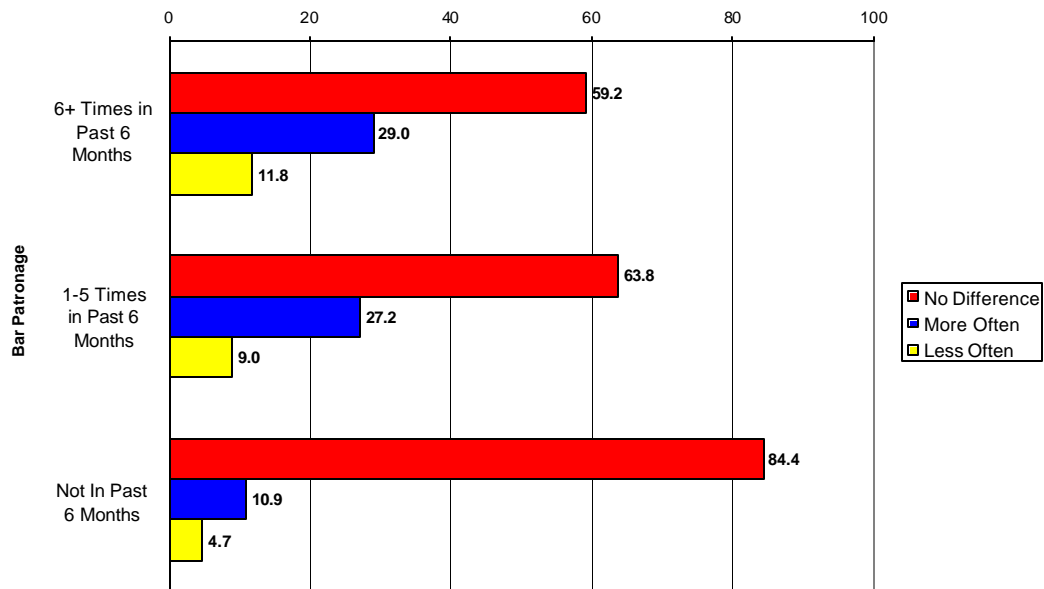
Source: Hellenthal & Associates (April 2005)

DO YOU SUPPORT THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY MAKING ALL WORKPLACES SMOKE-FREE?



Source: Hellenthal & Associates (April 2005)

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF BARS IN ANCHORAGE WERE SMOKEFREE? GO OUT MORE, LESS OR NO DIFFERENCE?



Source: Hellenthal & Associates (April 2005)

- The Anchorage survey findings are further reinforced by Tim Zagat, founder of the Zagat Survey, the internationally respected guide to restaurants, nightlife, hotels and attractions worldwide in the *Philadelphia Business Journal*:

“[I]t is clear from our surveys that the vast majority of Americans prefer their restaurants, bars, and clubs to be smoke-free. ... Every time the issue comes up, opponents of smoke-free laws argue that these laws would devastate small businesses. The opposite is true.”<sup>17</sup>

## **Conclusion**

- Although smokers comprise only a small portion of the Anchorage population, exposure to secondhand smoke is recognized as a substantial cause of preventable death. (Adult smoking prevalence in the Alaska's urban areas is estimated at 17.3%.<sup>18</sup>)
- Deaths in Alaska caused by secondhand smoke exceed deaths from motor vehicle accidents and are approximately three times greater than homicide.<sup>19</sup> For Anchorage, secondhand smoke-caused deaths amount to roughly one death per week.
- Workers in the hospitality industry where smoking is permitted are particularly at risk of secondhand smoke-caused heart-related disease and death. The effects of even brief (minutes to hours) “passive smoking” are often nearly as large (average 80% to 90%) as chronic active smoking.
- There is overwhelming popular support (74%) for the Anchorage Assembly to make all workplaces smokefree.
  - A majority of smokers (56.5%) agree that that “people need protection from secondhand smoke.”<sup>20</sup>
  - Recognition of the hazard of secondhand smoke among smokers is reflected in the fact that approximately half of smokers (48%) do not allow smoking anywhere inside their own homes while only a tiny fraction of smokers (7%) agree that smoking is “OK anywhere” in their own home.<sup>21</sup>
  - The vast majority of smokers (81%) state they want to quit and each year about half of smokers make an attempt to quit their addiction.<sup>22</sup>
- Well designed studies based on verifiable economic data (tax receipts, employment data) show that smoke-free laws do not harm the economy and can have a positive impact. Hundreds of local communities and more than a dozen states have enacted comprehensive smokefree workplace policies, including restaurants and bars, without adverse impact to the hospitality industry.

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- <sup>13</sup> American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). Environmental Tobacco Smoke. Position Document. Approved by the ASHRAE Board of Directors. June 30, 2005.
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<sup>17</sup> Tim Zagat, “Support for smoking ban”, *Philadelphia Business Journal*, April 28, 2006.

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