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Statewide survey highlights support for prohibiting smoking in workplaces
Workers need to be protected, Pennsylvanians say

HARRISBURG – By overwhelming margins, Pennsylvanians support prohibiting smoking in workplaces in order to protect employees from the effects of tobacco smoke pollution (TSP), according to the results of a 2005 statewide educational survey issued today by the Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco (PACT).

Eighty (80) percent of Pennsylvanians surveyed support prohibiting workplace smoking throughout the state, said Martin Raniowski, chairperson of PACT's advisory council.

The scientifically-conducted survey, he added, highlights the views of a random sample of 650 Pennsylvanians on issues concerning exposure to tobacco smoke pollution, also called secondhand smoke, including that the right to be protected is more important than the rights of business owners to allow smoking in their establishments.

PACT, a cooperative effort of and funded in part by the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association and American Lung Association, is a statewide coalition focusing on grassroots public policy, advocacy and education on tobacco control issues, and improving the health of the residents of the commonwealth through reduced tobacco usage. The survey was conducted January 3-5, 2005, by Susquehanna Polling and Research, Inc., of Harrisburg.

Exposure to someone else's tobacco smoke kills nearly 53,000 Americans each year, including up to 3,200 Pennsylvanians and is the third leading cause of preventable death in the nation and the commonwealth. Studies by the Centers for Disease Control and numerous other researchers have proven the smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including 200 poisons and 50 cancer-causing chemicals. It also has the same effects on nonsmokers as smokers, causing cancer, heart disease and numerous respiratory illnesses. Tobacco smoke pollution is classified by the Environmental Protection Agency as a known human Class A carcinogen, as

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dangerous as other potent cancer-causing agents such as asbestos and benzene. And the 2002 Environmental Health Information Service's 10th Report on Carcinogens noted there is no safe level of exposure to Class A carcinogens.

“For every eight people killed by their own smoking, one nonsmoker dies from exposure to tobacco smoke, too,” Raniowski said.

Nearly one-third of Pennsylvania’s workplaces lack a smoke-free policy and most of those are in the hospitality industry, said Marlin Williams, also of PACT’s advisory council.

“Employees, no matter where they work, shouldn’t have to risk their health to do their job,” Williams said.

According to The International Journal of Cancer, workers exposed to large amounts of tobacco smoke pollution, like bartenders, waitresses and waiters, have a much greater risk of lung cancer, nearly triple other workers. While working in a restaurant or bar that allows smoking, even non-smoking waiters and waitresses can literally “puff” up to a pack a day because of lingering tobacco smoke.

“Across the board, the survey shows that Pennsylvanians want clean indoor air everywhere for everyone,” Williams said. “It’s healthier for the workers and for customers, too.

“It’s very simple. This is a health issue for workers in all workplaces. Other states are protecting their workers from the effects of tobacco smoke pollution. Are workers here any less deserving?”

For more information and other key findings from the survey visit PACT’s Web site at www.pactonline.org.