



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Statewide Smoke-Free Law Must Be Comprehensive, Preserve Local Control and Is Not a Substitute for a Significant Tobacco Tax Increase**

*Statement of the American Lung Association, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (January 13, 2009)** – As the leading health organizations dedicated to reducing tobacco-caused death and disease in Kentucky and the nation, we are encouraged that our elected leaders are declaring their commitment to reducing tobacco use in the Commonwealth.

Our local communities have led the way by implementing smoke-free ordinances in 21 Kentucky communities. This local leadership has empowered state policymakers like Senate President David Williams to move forward with proposing a comprehensive statewide smoke-free law.

To be truly effective, a statewide smoke-free law must include the following:

- It must not undermine local progress in any way. Our organizations are strongly committed to local control of smoke-free laws. It cannot in any way include preemptive language. It must specify that local communities will have the ability to enact laws stronger than the state law if they choose.
- It must be comprehensive. All indoor workplaces and public places, including bars and restaurants, must be smoke-free without exception.
- It must be enforced. Ensuring compliance with a statewide smoke-free law is imperative, but also challenging unless a critical mass of local communities already have strong laws in place. Experience from other states indicates that significant state dollars must be invested in a campaign to educate the public, business owners and business personnel to ensure compliance with a statewide law.

Our organizations will enthusiastically support a statewide smoke-free law that meets all those requirements. If the legislation is weakened, rendered unenforceable or in any way limits the authority of local governments, our organizations will actively oppose it. There is no room for compromise on these principles because the health of our citizens is at stake.

A smoke-free law also should not be viewed as an either-or proposition with regard to other measures to reduce tobacco use. It is not a substitute for a significant tobacco tax increase this legislative session. The tobacco tax should be as high as possible, with Governor Beshear's 70-cent increase proposal being the minimum needed to make a significant impact.



A large body of scientific research makes it clear that we can eliminate tobacco use as a serious public health problem, but the main obstacle to achieving this goal has been a lack of political will, not a lack of proven solutions. The most effective way to reduce tobacco use is through a comprehensive approach that includes higher tobacco taxes, laws requiring that all workplaces and public places be smoke-free, and tobacco prevention and cessation programs funded at the level recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This is the “trifecta” that Kentucky needs to significantly reduce the human and financial toll of tobacco use.

Governor Steve Beshear's proposal to significantly increase the cigarette tax, and Senator Williams' recent statements about the need for a comprehensive statewide smoke-free law, signal a desire to address the state's number one preventable cause of death. But the state must also fund a statewide, comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation program at the recommended \$57 million year, instead of the current level of less than \$3 million, to keep youth from smoking and help smokers who want to quit.

Kentucky has the highest smoking rates in the nation because we have failed to implement public policies that are proven to reduce tobacco use. The annual cost of this inaction is the \$1.5 billion we spend on tobacco-related health problems and the 7,700 lives we lose to tobacco every year.

We look forward to working with President Willams, Speaker of the House Greg Stumbo, and Governor Beshear to build strong support in the General Assembly for the three proven policies that will reduce tobacco use, Kentucky's No. 1 cause of preventable death.

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