

Endorsement of the Smoke-Free Air Resolution for the Pennsylvania Faith Community

The Public Advocacy Action Team of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches signed on to a “Smoke-Free Air Resolution for the Pennsylvania Faith Community” provided by the Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco (PACT) at its September 20, 2005 meeting, and has requested that the Council’s Governing Board do so at its October 25 meeting. Many other congregations and other faith organizations have already signed on as well.

Background

According to Faith United Against Tobacco:

Smoking and other tobacco use take a terrible toll on our families and communities. It is our nation’s leading preventable cause of death, annually killing 440,000 of our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, friends and colleagues.

The Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco (PACT) provides the following information:

- *Tobacco smoke pollution (TSP), also called secondhand smoke, is classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a known human Class A carcinogen and is comparable to the most potent cancer-causing agents.*
- *TSP has the same dangerous effects on nonsmokers as smokers. It causes cancer, heart attacks, and numerous respiratory illnesses.*
- *Exposure to TSP causes up to 3,400 deaths in PA each year...making it the third leading cause of preventable death.*
- *80% of Pennsylvanians favor prohibiting smoking in workplaces.*
- *By a margin of nearly 5 to 1, Pennsylvanians are MORE likely to patronize smoke-free establishments.*

For more Pennsylvania statistics, see the attachment entitled “Statistics Regarding Tobacco Use in Pennsylvania.”

There has been growing sentiment among some legislators to address the issue of smoking in public places. Currently there are two bills, House Bill No. 1489 and Senate Bill No. 602, which deal with second-hand smoke and the clean indoor air. From a September 30 article in the ***Punxsutawney Spirit***:

If Senate Bill No. 602, which is proposed to take effect Jan. 1, 2006, passes, smoking would be prohibited in the following public places: Educational facilities, school buses, health facilities, auditoriums, arenas, theaters, museums, restaurants, bars or taverns, concert halls, commercial establishments, service lines, grocery stores, bingo halls, waiting rooms or areas, hallways, polling places, restrooms, elevators and malls.

Exceptions to the bill include private residences, private social functions and wholesale or retail tobacco shops.

The house bill contains similar provisions.

Why This Issue is Important to the Pennsylvania Council of Churches

We acknowledge that in a healthy society, the well being of all is a priority. As Christians, we believe that Christ came so that, in the words of John the evangelist, we “may have life, and have it abundantly.” In addition, we believe in the two great commandments, that we are to love God, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Healthy persons and communities grow and flourish when society creates an environment that ensures that all have what they need to sustain them throughout every age and stage of life. This includes a safe environment that does not pose risks for any members of society.



SMOKE-FREE AIR RESOLUTION FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA FAITH COMMUNITY

- Because,** Secondhand smoke kills thousands of Pennsylvanians every year and the faith community of Pennsylvania believes we have a moral obligation to prevent these needless deaths; and
- Because,** We all have the right to breathe clean, safe, smoke-free air; and
- Because,** Ventilation systems do not protect our families and workers from secondhand smoke; and
- Because,** Every independent study of communities with smoke-free laws shows that going smoke-free does not hurt restaurant business, bar business, or tourism;

The undersigned Pennsylvania faith based organization supports:

100% smoke-free indoor public places and workplaces, including eating and drinking establishments, in Pennsylvania

Name of Organization (*please print*) Number of Members

Authorized Signature Contact person (*please print*) Date

Organization Street Address County

City State Zip

Phone Fax

Email

Best way to contact you: Email Phone Fax

Return to: The Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco (PACT)
c/o American Lung Association of Pennsylvania
3001 Old Gettysburg Road
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania 17011
(717) 541-8828 FAX (717) 541-5864 PHONE

Statistics Regarding Tobacco Use in Pennsylvania (from the Centers for Disease Control)

Many states are experiencing decreased funding for tobacco control. In partial response to this, the CDC prepared data tables to help emphasize why comprehensive tobacco control is important. There is a broad range of measures that reflect the impact of tobacco use, particularly among disparate populations.

Prevalence of smoking among adults and number of smoking adults

24.6 percent of 2,283,960 adults in Pennsylvania smoke.

Number of projected deaths among smokers

Tobacco-related illnesses are the leading cause of preventable death in Pennsylvania, killing an estimated 19,843 Pennsylvanians annually.

Prevalence of smoking among youth and number of smoking youth (grades 9-12)

Each day, approximately 4,400 youths in the United States aged 12-17 try their first cigarette and an estimated 2,000 become daily smokers. In Pennsylvania alone, 27.6 percent of all high school students (grades 9-12) are current smokers.

Number of youth projected to start smoking

936,921 youth under age 18 in Pennsylvania could become future smokers if current smoking patterns are not reduced.

Number of projected deaths among youth smokers

299,815 youth under age 18 in Pennsylvania could die prematurely from a smoking-related illness if current smoking patterns are not reduced.

Number of daily smokers who try to quit

Among those adults that smoke every day in Pennsylvania, 49.8 percent tried to quit.

Prevalence of smoking by:

Race/Ethnicity

Asian- and African-Americans have the highest—33.5 and 32.5 percent respectively—in Pennsylvania compared to Whites with the lowest at 23.4 percent.

Education

34.3 percent of Pennsylvania residents aged 25 and older with less than a high school degree currently smoke, compared to 17.5 percent with more than a high school degree.

Household Income

30.9 percent of Pennsylvanians whose household income is less than \$35,000 per year currently smoke, compared to 20.8 percent of Pennsylvanians whose household income is \$35,000 or more.

Age

In Pennsylvania, smoking estimates are highest among those aged 18-29 with 32.7 percent and lowest among those aged 45 and older with 18.2 percent.

People protected by non-smoking policies at worksite/home

In Pennsylvania, 68.9 percent of employees report that non-smoking policies protect them from exposure to second hand smoke in the worksite.

57.1 percent of residents in Pennsylvania reported they had a rule that smoking was not allowed in their home.

Economic impact of tobacco use

In 2002, each pack of cigarettes sold in Pennsylvania costs an estimated \$8.49 per pack in smoking-attributable direct medical expenses and lost productivity.

In Pennsylvania, people consumed 86.9 packs of cigarettes in 2002.

In Pennsylvania, smoking-attributable Medicaid costs per pack of cigarettes was \$1.48 in 2002.

In 2002, smoking attributable Medicaid costs in Pennsylvania was \$166.87 per adult.

(compiled from PACT resource materials)