



**Public Health Committee  
February 29, 2007  
American Cancer Society Testimony**

**Andrew Salner, M.D.**

**SB 419 – An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Regulated Areas of Casinos.**

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, distinguished members of the committee, good morning. My name is Dr. Andrew Salner. I am the Director of the Helen and Harry Gray Cancer Center at Hartford Hospital. I am the Past-Chair, American Cancer Society, New England Division. I am also Chair of the Connecticut Cancer Partnership, a public and private coalition of over 300 cancer experts and health care organizations funded by a grant from the CDC to create and implement a Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan here in Connecticut. Today, I am speaking on behalf of the American Cancer Society.

Smoking related diseases are the single most preventable cause of death in our society. Tobacco use accounts for 1/3 of all cancer deaths, including lung, oral, throat, esophagus, pancreas, cervix, kidney, bladder, and stomach cancers. It also accounts for cardiovascular, pulmonary, and cerebrovascular deaths. Connecticut has demonstrated leadership in establishing a clean indoor air law and by levying taxes on tobacco products. These have helped to decrease use rates and improve the quality of the air we breathe.

Secondhand smoke causes between 35,000 and 40,000 deaths from heart disease every year. 3,000 otherwise healthy nonsmokers will die of lung cancer annually because of their exposure to secondhand smoke. These deaths occur because tobacco users are not the only ones who breathe smoke—all the people around them inhale it too. The total annual costs of secondhand smoke exposure are estimated to be at least \$5 billion in direct medical costs and at least \$5 billion in indirect costs. Therefore, to protect those who choose not to smoke and to reduce the costs associated with treating tobacco-related disease, the American Cancer Society has always been on the forefront of efforts to pass smoke-free air policies that restrict the places where people can light up.

Nearly five years ago, the Clean Indoor Air Act was introduced in an effort to protect Connecticut's workforce and public from the harmful effects of second hand smoke. Opponents of the proposed legislation argued that businesses would close, employees would quit, employers would have a hard time hiring new employees and businesses would have difficulty attracting customers as a result of the Act. After looking at the facts, it is clear that these concerns were unfounded. The facts are that smoke-free laws are good for businesses; they're good for the people who frequent them; and they're good for the people who work in them. Research published in leading, scientific journals has consistently and conclusively shown that smoke-free laws have no adverse effects on the hospitality industry, and, in fact, can actually be good for business. The 2006 Surgeon General's Report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, concluded that "Evidence from peer-reviewed studies shows that smoke-free policies and regulations do not have an adverse economic impact on the hospitality industry."

Finally, it must be taken into consideration that while casino patrons can choose in which establishments they spend their time, workers often do not have the same choice. The American Cancer Society believes that no one should have to choose between a job and good health. Therefore, the American Cancer Society stands in support of **SB 419 – An Act to Prohibit Smoking in Regulated Areas of Casinos**,

however we believe that while the Clean Indoor Air Act as it exists today is strong, it could be made stronger and more lives could be saved. We therefore urge the legislature to examine the remaining exemptions with an eye towards improving the Act in the future, making it stronger and providing even more of a smoke-free environment for the citizen's of Connecticut. We stand ready to work with the legislature and the other proponents of clean indoor air in any way we can towards that goal. Conversely, we would vigorously oppose any attempts to use this bill or any subsequent examination of the remaining exemptions as an opportunity to weaken the Act.

With respects to the bill as raised, Tribal casinos have, in the past, taken a number of steps to provide as smoke-free of an environment as possible for their non-smoking customers short of an outright ban and we appreciate those efforts. We remain committed to assisting them in any way we can to provide a positive customer satisfaction experience in casino restaurants, retail stores, entertainment venues, hotels- *- and the gaming floor itself*. However, there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Citing the benefits of smoke-free policies and the lack of evidence that smoking restrictions would have a devastating effect on businesses, the Institute of Medicine in its 2007 report, *Ending the Tobacco Problem: A Blueprint for the Nation*, recommends enacting "complete bans on smoking in all nonresidential indoor locations, including workplaces, malls, restaurants, and bars." The evidence clearly shows that smoke-free initiatives are good for everyone, including businesses and their workers.

The health care crisis in America affects all of us and the heavy financial burden spiraling costs put on us all will only get worse unless we act now. Over half the country enjoys some variation of smoke free laws now and studies have shown a significant improvement in the health of workers once smoke free workplace laws went into effect. In some cases health improvements were evident within weeks of the new laws being implemented. Policies that encourage smokers to quit or to cut back their tobacco consumption ultimately save employers money. Smoking employees have significantly higher absentee, injury, accident, and disciplinary rates than their non-smoking colleagues. We have a duty to support legislation that will reduce cancer, reduce health care costs and most importantly, save lives.

Respectfully submitted,

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