



**Public Health Committee
February 27, 2009
American Cancer Society Testimony**

Andrew Salner, M.D.

**HB 5608 – An Act Concerning the Issuance of Liquor Permits to Casinos
That Permit Smoking in the Casinos**

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, 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.

While being well intentioned, The American Cancer Society must oppose **HB 5608- An Act Concerning the Issuance of Liquor Permits to Casinos that Permit Smoking in the Casinos** as it is currently written. We support instead, Attorney General Blumenthal's proposal of amending this bill to provide for a gradual three-year phase-in of a complete smoke free environment on casino gaming floors.

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. However, there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

The only way to ensure worker and customer health care is by enacting a complete ban on smoking at the casinos. Multiple studies and tests have concluded that ventilation systems, no matter how advanced, no matter how well placed and how effective they are, can never completely eliminate second hand smoke. Plus, even the most sophisticated ventilation in the world can't prevent smoke from escaping through doors opening and closing.

The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) sets standards for ventilation rates. These standards are so widely accepted that they considered the industry norms throughout North America and many other parts of the world. At its Summer 2005 Conference, the ASHRAE Board of Directors unanimously adopted a position document on secondhand smoke, which states that ventilation cannot eliminate the health dangers posed by secondhand smoke.

Leading ventilation manufacturers themselves regularly warn in product disclaimers that their own products do not completely protect people from the dangers of second hand smoke.

Additionally, as long ago as 2003 in a section on their own website entitled "*Policies, Practices and Positions - Public Place Smoking*" Philip Morris, a leading cigarette manufacturer, has admitted that ventilation does not address health issues.

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. 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.

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 strongly believes that a 100% smoke free environment will provide for better working conditions; help ease the health care crisis burden on all of Connecticut's citizens and most importantly save lives.

Respectfully submitted,

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