



American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

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TO: Public Health Committee

FROM: Joni Czajkowski, Sr. Director, Government Relations and Advocacy

DATE: February 27, 2009

RE: House Bill No. 5608, An Act Concerning the Issuance of Liquor Permits to Casinos that Permit Smoking in the Casino

Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the committee. My name is Joni Czajkowski, Sr. Director, Government Relations & Advocacy with the American Heart Association. On behalf of the American Heart Association, I am here to speak on behalf of HB 5608, AAC the Issuance of Liquor Permits to Casinos that Permit Smoking in the Casino.

The American Heart Association is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to support and advocate for public policies that will help build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke with an impact goal to reduce coronary heart disease, stroke and risk by 25 percent by 2010. The AHA's 2009 Policy Goals for Connecticut include Chain of Survival, Stroke, and Access to Care, Obesity Prevention, Quality and Availability to Care, Women and Heart Disease and Tobacco Control.

The American Heart Association would be hard pressed to achieve its 2010 impact goal to reduce CVD and risk by 25% if tobacco control were ignored. While HB 5608 addresses secondhand smoke in our casinos it does not go far enough. The AHA remains steadfast in the pursuit of 100% smokefree casinos. The designation of nonsmoking areas and so called "state-of-the-art ventilation for smoking areas is not a concept that the American Heart Association can stand behind.

An estimated 35,052 nonsmokers die from coronary heart disease (CHD) each year as a result of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke. Secondhand smoke is the combination of "mainstream smoke" (the smoke exhaled by a smoker) and side-stream smoke (from the burning end of the cigarette). Secondhand smoke is also referred to as environmental tobacco smoke, passive smoke and involuntary tobacco smoke. It is a complex mixture of over 4,000 chemicals that are produced by the burning materials of a cigarette.

The U.S. Surgeon General's 2006 report on the Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke found secondhand smoke exposure causes disease and premature death in children and adults who do not smoke. The report concluded that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke (1). The safety of workers and the public is not a matter of choice for business owners. Casinos in Connecticut already adhere to health and safety requirements for workers and the public and providing a safe and healthy work environment, free of secondhand smoke should not be an exception.

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For those individuals supportive of ventilation systems and designated smoking rooms the AHA continues to oppose these options. Ventilation systems and smoking rooms do not provide effective protection to the public and workers from the deadly effects of secondhand smoke (2).

The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), the international standard-setting body for indoor air quality, concluded that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke and that ventilation and other air filtration technologies cannot eliminate the health risks caused by secondhand smoke (3).

The American Heart Association and our anti-tobacco partners remain steadfast in our pursuit to improve the health and well-being of the residents of our state. Smokefree casinos is a workers right bill and sound public health policy. On behalf of the American Heart Association, I thank you for your time and consideration.

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1. US Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General. US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office of Smoking and Health, 2006
 2. World Health Organization (2007). Protection and Exposure to Second-hand Tobacco Smoke. Policy Recommendations.
 3. Samet J et al. (2005) ASHRAE position document on environmental tobacco smoke. American Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).