



**Public Health Committee**  
**February 9, 2011**  
**American Cancer Society Testimony**

The American Cancer Society strongly supports **SB 884 – *An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Private Clubs.***

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.

There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke—be it in a casino, private club or small business. 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 private clubs.

Private clubs are often not private at all. In practice, they are often open to the public at certain times and host events that are attended by people that do not commonly frequent the club. Some may have paid employees. Smokefree laws should apply to all workplaces, regardless of ownership or membership. Private clubs routinely comply with public health and safety laws such as building codes and sanitation laws; so complying with a smokefree law would not be out of the ordinary.

While 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 is supportive of efforts to strengthen the Clean Indoor Air Act. The Society strongly believes that a smoke free environment will provide for better conditions for both employees and patrons; help ease the health care crisis burden on all of Connecticut’s citizens and most importantly save lives.

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