



AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION
The Christmas Seal People



Coalition on Smoking OR Health

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HEALTH GROUPS CALL ON PRESIDENT BUSH TO BAN SMOKING IN FEDERAL BUILDINGS

Washington, D.C., Jan. 7 -- Following release today of the Environmental Protection Agency's report on the health risks of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, the American Lung Association, American Heart Association and American Cancer Society, united as the Coalition on Smoking OR Health, called on President Bush to conclude his White House years on a healthful note by prohibiting smoking in all federal buildings.

On January 25, 1991, Health and Human Services Secretary Louis W. Sullivan, M.D., formally asked President Bush to sign an Executive Order prohibiting smoking in most federal buildings. (It would not apply to Congress, the Supreme Court or the Department of Defense.) Under existing rules, federal agencies are permitted to set their own individual smoking policies. Sullivan said the order would protect workers, persons doing business with the government and public visitors from the "dangers of smoking."

"It's been two years since Secretary Sullivan proposed making federal buildings smoke-free," said Alfred Munzer, M.D., a Coalition spokesman and president-elect of the American Lung Association. "The new EPA report adds greater weight to Sullivan's argument. It's time for President Bush to do the right thing before he leaves office. He can set an example for the

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rest of the nation by making federal buildings smoke free."

The Coalition called the new EPA document "a major milestone linking tobacco use with death and disease."

"We expect the EPA report will send reverberations across the country, leading to state and local policies for smoke-free schools, workplaces and public places," said Munzer.

The EPA report, two years in the making, concludes that exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), can cause lung cancer in nonsmokers. ETS is a mixture of the smoke exhaled by smokers and the smoke that comes from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe. Exposure to ETS will cause an estimated 3,000 lung cancer deaths in 1993. The EPA report designates ETS as a Group A carcinogen, a rating used only for dangerous substances (such as asbestos) known to cause cancer in humans.

The report also concludes that exposure to ETS increases the risk of serious lung disease during the first two years of a child's life.

"Children -- especially babies and very young children -- are particularly susceptible to the health effects of exposure to ETS. Their lungs are smaller and suffer disproportionately because they are still growing and developing," explained Munzer.

"The mounting evidence clearly supports the need for tighter restrictions on smoking in public places," he said. "Yet even the most stringent current state and local laws fail to fully protect nonsmokers from the lethal hazards of ETS."

The Coalition on Smoking OR Health recommends that smoking be prohibited in all public places, including schools, child day care centers, workplaces, restaurants, hospitals, trains, sports arenas and shopping malls.

"The Coalition supports federal, state and local legislative and/or regulatory efforts to

significantly strengthen existing clean indoor air laws that include provisions to restrict smoking in public places. We also urge enactment of strict laws where there are currently none on the books," said Munzer.

"Employers should take heed as the evidence indicting ETS mounts," he warned. "They should, of course, prohibit smoking in their workplaces to protect the health of their workers, but also to protect themselves from possible future liability and to reduce health insurance costs."

He noted that one recurring, cost-cutting theme in the debate over health care reform is the need for citizens to take more responsibility for their own health. "Public officials -- like President Bush -- can help create an environment that enables citizens to take that responsibility," said Munzer. "Preventing disease is much less emotionally, physically and financially costly than treating it. Clearing the air of environmental tobacco smoke will improve the health of our people and our health care system."

The Coalition on Smoking OR Health was formed in 1982 by the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association and American Lung Association to more effectively inform federal legislators and other public officials about the health consequences of tobacco use. The three health organizations represent more than six million volunteers throughout the United States.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Hot off the presses! Beginning today, a new brochure, entitled "Reducing the Health Risks of Secondhand Smoke: What You Can Do at Home, Work and in Public Places," is available to the public through their local American Lung Association (check your local telephone white pages for number and location). The ALA brochure is the first of its kind to offer guidance for individuals concerned about exposure to environmental tobacco smoke. It was developed in collaboration with the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Cancer Institute. The brochure was funded by a grant from DuPont.

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