

The Tobacco Institute

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FOR RELEASE:

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**FURTHER LEGISLATIVE ACTION
ON AIRLINE SMOKING UNWARRANTED**

Congress Should Await DOT Study -- No Public Demand

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- In testimony today, The Tobacco Institute urged the House Subcommittee on Aviation to reject proposals to extend or expand the temporary ban on smoking aboard commercial flights of two hours or less and to take action to restore a balanced approach to smoking aboard aircraft upon the "sunset" of the current legislation.

Calling proposals to impose an all-out smoking ban "extreme," The Tobacco Institute said that legislative proposals now before Congress are not justified by either proven health considerations or public expressions of support for a smoking ban, and would short circuit the ongoing Department of Transportation (DOT) Cabin Air Quality Study.

Only last year, as part of the compromise law that brought about the temporary two-hour ban, Congress authorized DOT to fund a comprehensive study on the broad question of cabin air quality. That study is now underway and is scheduled to be completed well before the sunset of the temporary two-hour ban.

"Prudence dictates that Congress await the results of this ongoing study before taking any further legislative action. Such legislative action may well not be scientifically justified and, especially in the case of anti-smoking legislation, will likely not prove relevant to the broad objective of improving cabin air quality," said former Congressman Charles Whitley, testifying for The Tobacco Institute.

Environmental toxicologist Larry Holcomb, Ph.D., told the Subcommittee that "It is my judgement that a ban on passenger smoking aboard commercial airlines cannot be justified on the basis of risk to health."

Holcomb also pointed to the Federal Aviation Administration statement in the Federal Register just last month that said, "At this time, scientific evidence has not sufficiently established that there is a significant health risk to nonsmoking passengers and crew members, while on board an aircraft, when other passengers are smoking and the existing smoking regulations are enforced."

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Both Whitley and Holcomb pointed out that empirical studies dealing specifically with the situation aboard aircraft consistently find minimal levels of exposure to ETS.

As recently as last summer, a comprehensive scientific review of existing literature by Holcomb was published in Environmental Technology Letters, a peer-reviewed journal. That review concluded that the "measurements of the constituents of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) failed to support claims that exposure levels in aircraft affect adversely the health of nonsmoking passengers or crew."

There is no grass roots support for a smoking ban on airlines. Of the over 6,000 comments received by the Department of Transportation's Office of Consumer Affairs -- only 77 have been in favor of the two-hour ban.

"Especially when millions of American air travelers choose to smoke, enactment of legislation to ban smoking aboard commercial airliners is neither justified nor appropriate," said Whitley in summing up all of the evidence.

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