



".....[I]f you want to protect me from passive smoke,.....for two hours, why in the world wouldn't you want to protect me over the longer period of time? Aren't I running more risk by being in an airplane for six hours while people around me are smoking?"

-Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), appearing on the Macneil/Lehrer Newshour, September 16, 1989

Smoking Control Advocacy Resource Center (SCARC)
INFORMATION ALERT

September 20, 1989

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Issue: Senate Bans Smoking on All Domestic Flights

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Summary

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A House-Senate conference committee will be considering, perhaps within the next few days, a bill that would permanently ban smoking on all domestic airline flights in the U.S.

Zoe Mikva
Director of Development

The conference committee was called after the Senate passed the total ban on September 14. In August the House passed a bill that would make the current ban on flights of two hours or less permanent. Both bills would supersede the current two hour ban on domestic flights which is due to expire in April, 1990.

Phillip Wilbur
Director
Health Advocacy Resource Center

The success of the Senate bill reflects broad-based support for smoking control both on Capitol Hill and across the country. Research by airlines shows that fewer than 20% of their passengers are smokers, and that even fewer prefer to sit in a smoking section. Jo Ellen Deutsch, government affairs manager for the Association of Flight Attendants, called the action "a vote for the lives of thousands of flight attendants in this country and of millions of passengers."

Judy Butler
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The testimony and lobbying efforts of the flight attendants appear to have had a major impact on this difficult legislative fight. The involuntary health risks associated with their constant exposure to ambient smoke in the plane drew into focus the public health questions involved in the smoking ban. It is workplace smoking for these airline workers, and their (sometimes tragic) stories projected human faces on the facts and figures provided by health groups.

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Objective

To be aware of the current status of the airline smoking ban, and to note the effectiveness of the Association of Flight Attendants in framing airline smoking as a workplace/public health issue.

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Industry Arguments and Responses

Argument: Intolerance of smoking has gone way beyond any genuine health concern about the effect of ambient smoke on non-smokers.

Response: For 70,000 airline flight attendants, involuntary smoking is a serious *workplace* hazard.

- * "We are truly hostages at 35,000 feet who are being subjected to pulmonary abuse by the passengers who smoke. Unlike other workers, whose health and safety are protected by standards set by governmental agencies, we as flight attendants are afforded no such attention." - Patricia Young, flight attendant, testifying before House Subcommittee on Aviation, Committee on Public Works and Transportation, June 22, 1989
- * "...I asked my two co-workers if they ever had cervical cancer...Both in their third year of flying had been diagnosed with and treated for cervical cancer...We have another flight attendant who recently at age 37 had two-thirds of her right lung removed due to lung cancer. Her doctors attribute her lung cancer to 17 years of working in the second hand smoke." - Suzette Ahrendt, flight attendant, testifying before House Subcommittee on Aviation, Committee on Public Works and Transportation, June 22, 1989
- * "Smokers' right to endanger their own health ends when they start endangering the health and safety of others." - Sen. Orrin Hatch, Republican of Utah, in USA Today, March 14, 1989
- * "I'm not putting any martinis in anybody else's vein, but they are putting smoke in other people's lungs. So, there's a profound difference here." - Carl Rowan (Washington Post columnist), appearing on "Inside Washington", September 16, 1989

Argument: There's no scientific research that proves that cigarette smoke endangers the health of non-smokers.

Response: The issue is not the number of non-smokers at risk. The issue is that we continue to allow such a clear and easily preventable health hazard.

The tobacco industry still contends that it has not been scientifically proven that smoking is harmful to *smokers*.

- * "No one denies that cigarette smoke is an irritant. It can burn even non-smoker's eyes and make their clothes smell...it also may endanger their health. The office of the Surgeon General says so. It estimates that 5,000 of more non-smokers suffer lung cancer every year from breathing in the 43 carcinogens found in tobacco smoke. The National Cancer Institute and Environmental Protection Agency say so. Their studies concluded this year that there's no way to segregate non-smokers from the cigarette smoke blown by smokers or smoldering from the end of a lit cigarette... And the National Academy of Sciences says so, too. It reported that a flight attendant working in a smoking section breathes in at least as much smoke as the non-smoking spouse of a pack-a-day smoker. That means flight attendants face a 34% greater chance of contracting cancer than other non-smokers." - editorial, USA Today, September 12, 1989

Useful Information

The following is a list of the members of Congress who will sit on the conference committee addressing the smoking ban legislation:

Representatives

William Lehman (D-FL)
Bob Carr (D-MI)
Richard Durbin (D-IL)
William Gray (D-PA)
Robert J. Mrazek (D-NY)
Martin Sabo (D-MN)
Silvio Conte (R-MA)
Lawrence Coughlin (R-PA)
Tom DeLay (R-TX)
Frank Wolf (R-VA)

Senators

Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)
Robert Byrd (D-WV)
Tom Harkin (D-IA)
Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)
Jim Sasser (D-TN)
Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY)
Pete Domenici (R-NM)
Charles Grassley (R-IA)
Bob Kasten (R-WI)

Those members who support the ban should be thanked for their help in the event that the bill passes.