

Hold For ETS meeting

THE TOBACCO INSTITUTE

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SAMUEL D. CHILCOTE, JR.
President

June 30, 1987

MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Committee

FR: Samuel D. Chilcote, Jr. 

Several months ago, we reported the beginnings of a shift in public attention -- caused in part by Tobacco Institute programs -- from the narrow subject of environmental tobacco smoke to the broader and more relevant questions of indoor air quality and ventilation.

In light of that trend, we have reexamined our strategy and will engage in an examination of several new approaches. As we proceed with this test, we will report results to you and the Institute advisory committees. The purpose of this memorandum is to share our observations and plan.

By way of introduction, please consider four points:

- o Helped in part by various Tobacco Institute programs, the national news media now are focusing more on indoor air quality than ETS science. We continue to see considerable coverage of specific state and local smoking restrictions.
- o There is some hope that the scientific community will remain open on the scientific and technical questions. However, public opinion about ETS is tied inextricably to the public's beliefs regarding primary smoking. We should not assume that a narrow, frontal attack on those long-established beliefs would be successful.
- o It is fair to assume that public attitudes towards ETS have worsened substantially in recent months. However, by 1984, 18 months before the Surgeon General's report, public attitudes were well beyond unacceptable.

In 1974, 46 percent of the public believed ETS is "probably hazardous." By 1984, the figure was nearly 70 percent, including a majority of smokers and nearly 80 percent of non-smokers. By 1984, public support of separate sections typically exceeded 70 percent even among smokers and ran as high as 96 percent among non-smokers.

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- o Finally, thanks to the extreme demands of the anti-smoking movement in Beverly Hills, we now have solid evidence of the economic damage wrought by smoking restrictions.

Through it all we see much opportunity. As we have seen with other controversies, we do have the ability to redefine issues, reduce the visibility of anti-smoking initiatives and increase our credibility in the process. Just as we would rather discuss tax reform than excises, we would prefer a debate on ventilation standards over one on ETS.

The program described here is intended to move us in that direction.

Business and Political Environment

The business and legislative environments have changed in several significant ways.

- o Media coverage of ETS science peaked in December 1986 but was followed by heavy coverage of specific legislative and regulatory proposals to restrict smoking. However, for the year ending May 30, 1987, coverage of overall indoor air quality was nearly twice as heavy as coverage of ETS science.

In the absence of new scientific reports on ETS, national media attention continues to shift to the broader indoor air quality issue.

- o Some of the scientific community appears to be unsatisfied with claims that ETS is harmful to non-smokers. Yet, there is no evidence that independent scientists are motivated to set the record straight. Some appear willing to live with shoddy ETS science as a means of encouraging smokers to quit.
- o Some traditional business allies appear tired of fighting smoking restrictions. At the same time, we are seeing the most extreme anti-smoking measures adopted voluntarily by private business.
- o Current anti-smoker extremism, i.e. the Beverly Hills restaurant restrictions, may be reversed and could help us encourage business groups to renew their opposition to smoking restrictions. By the same token, there seems to be growing public concern with extreme forms of discrimination against smokers.

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- o Spurred by organized labor and various health activists, elected and appointed officials at all levels of government are increasingly examining the question of indoor air quality. In these debates, labor has taken the position that ETS is low on its list of indoor air concerns.
- o Regulation of indoor air quality takes two courses.

The first has been control of sources of indoor pollution. With the exception of smoking restrictions, little has been done. The second approach has been ventilation standards. A variety of private and public agencies and organizations have examined ventilation issues for years, with uneven results.

Labor prefers ventilation as a solution to cleaner air. Business generally resists tougher ventilation standards but tends to prefer ventilation as an alternative to the control of the many substances found in the workplace.

Objective and Strategies

Our objective remains the same. We are opposed to all unnecessary restrictions on smoking and smokers.

But in response to the business and political changes noted above, we are assuming four strategies:

1. Continue positioning ETS as a small part of the overall indoor air quality issue. Decrease public debate solely on ETS.
2. Encourage third parties to seek indoor air quality and ventilation standards rather than smoking restrictions.
3. Continue efforts to encourage scientific scrutiny of anti-smokers' claims about ETS.
4. Attempt to reverse the most visible and damaging restrictions by demonstrating the failure of smoking restrictions to improve indoor air quality; and by showing the economic damage created by anti-smoker extremism, e.g. Beverly Hills.

Program

Our new direction relies on a combination of our more effective existing tactics and several new approaches.

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Legislative

The following tactics will augment the many approaches now available to legislative counsel to combat smoking restrictions. Institute practice permits counsel to utilize those tactics best suited to local conditions.

- o The Tobacco Institute will not support or oppose indoor air quality or ventilation standards. However, we will encourage third parties to seek such standards as an alternative to smoking restrictions.

For this tactic to be most effective in a given political situation, (1) organized labor must be politically influential, (2) business interests can no longer be relied upon (3) and media attention can be redirected to the broader question of indoor air quality.

- o On a case-by-case basis, we will encourage third parties to seek reconsideration of smoking restriction laws in light of new indoor air quality concerns.

Experts

- o Ventilation experts, led by Gray Robertson, have made more than 30 legislative appearances this year -- a number equal to all appearances in 1986.

Robertson also is approaching the end of the first year of a media tour, placing ETS in the proper context for reporters and talk show hosts throughout the country. In the first 11 months of the tour, he has visited 60 cities in 21 states, and spoken with representatives from more than 350 media organizations.

This will continue as aggressively as possible.

- o ETS Scientists join the ventilation experts on most occasions. To date in 1987, scientists have testified at 33 legislative hearings, from Vermont to Arizona, Montana to Arkansas -- again equal the number of hearings in which these scientists participated in all of 1986. In addition, they have participated in a dozen private briefings for allies, legislators and the media.

Additionally, scientists serve as members of "truth squads" which raise serious questions about anti-smoker claims in meetings with editorial boards and radio, television and newspaper reporters.

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These tactics also will continue with an emphasis on overall indoor air quality.

- o The Portable Air Sampling System (PASS) has been taken into Dallas to demonstrate that ETS is a minor component of indoor air. Results from samples taken in 70 workplaces and restaurants were released at a news conference today in Dallas. They confirm results from similar tests completed last year in New York City, and on board commercial aircraft.

We have proposed that the Center for Indoor Air Research sponsor one more of these studies this year and another four next year, building towards a national sample.

- o Science writer Alan Katzenstein has responded to numerous lay and technical articles, and regularly grants interviews with print and broadcast journalists. As a recognized commentator on these and other environmental topics, his work for The Institute will continue to help modify the debate.
- o The Center for Indoor Air Research will focus on the scientific aspects of the issue and seek to encourage proper scientific scrutiny of anti-smokers' claims.

As proposed, the Center's secretary will be a member of The Tobacco Institute staff with a responsibility to advise the Center on how best to contribute to the public policy debate.

Coalitions

- o Public relations counsel, working with local restaurateurs, has done an effective job of promoting the devastating economic impact of Beverly Hills restaurant smoking ban. If Beverly Hills softens its ordinance, The Institute will promote this reversal heavily.
- o Organized labor remains our strongest ally in the battle against smoking restrictions. The Tobacco Industry Labor Management Committee has completed a number of materials that are now available to assist unions in dealing with this issue.

A videotape featuring Sheet Metal Workers Union President Edward Carlough and Gray Robertson places indoor air quality in a labor context. A package of materials offers practical advice and assistance to unions confronted with management or legislated attempts to restrict smoking. An advertisement challenges the Surgeon General's preoccupation with ETS. All of these materials have been endorsed by the presidents of the five unions that are represented on the committee.

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- o The National Energy Management Institute (NEMI) and the Labor Management Committee are jointly sponsoring a project that will enable NEMI, the labor-management organization of the sheet metal industry, to train more than 200 contractors across the country to conduct specialized indoor air quality studies that place ETS in the proper context.

Service employee unions in Maine and New Hampshire have launched an indoor air quality awareness campaign, and have asked Gray Robertson to be their spokesman.

Assistance to Organizations and Individuals
Concerned with Restrictions

- o The Institute continues to offer advice and assistance to companies seeking help on the workplace smoking issue. Unsolicited requests for help in the first five months of 1987 exceed the total for all of 1986. Detailed briefings have been given thus far this year to 250 companies, almost double that of 1986.

Staff has developed a resource guide that describes briefly the services The Institute will offer to 50,000 businesses per quarter as part of its corporate relations program. Mass mailings will begin next month to deliver this guide to employers in states and localities considering legislated restrictions, and in areas where anti-smoking activity is strongest.

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