

STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

to the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND
TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Presented by

Mr. Mel Martin, President
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1720 Regal Row, Suite 112
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RE: LEGISLATION TO BAN SMOKING
ON AIRLINE AIRCRAFT

October 7, 1987

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Mel Martin, and I am President of the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) which is a 27,000 member professional organization concerned about health promotion and public awareness of respiratory health. Its members include respiratory therapists, physicians, and other health care professionals. AARC is pleased to have this opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee to express our support for a smoking ban on airline aircraft.

The American Association for Respiratory Care has targeted airlines for a permanent ban because second-hand cigarette smoke may be more dangerous to people on airplanes than in other public places.

Ventilation systems aboard commercial airliners may not empty smoke as well as those found in homes or office buildings. As a result, both smoking and non-smoking passengers may be exposed to higher concentrations of toxic gases and chemicals.

Second-hand smoke contains over 3,000 toxic chemicals, including carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, arsenic, hydrogen cyanide, ammonia, formic acid and cadmium. Concentrations of these chemicals and gases can become quite high in airplanes because smokers tend to light up at the same time: after the "no-smoking" light is turned off and following meals. While smoke is more dense in the smoking section, passengers in the non-smoking sections are also exposed due to recycled air and inadequate filtering systems.

Exposure to high concentrations of cigarette smoke can cause severe problems for people with heart conditions and lung diseases like asthma and emphysema. Long-term exposure has been linked to a higher incidence of lung cancer, lung

damage and birth defects. In particular, children and pregnant women face a potential health risk from second-hand smoke.

The American Association for Respiratory Care believes that separation of smoking and non-smoking areas is not sufficient to minimize the effects of passive smoking aboard airlines. Therefore, the AARC joins the American Medical Association, the American Lung Association, the National Research Council and other prominent health groups in asking for a smoking ban on all commercial passenger air flights.

In this regard, the American Association for Respiratory Care sponsored a study designed to determine if airline passengers favored a smoking ban on all commercial airline flights. The survey polled 33,242 airline passengers at 89 airports in 39 states. The results showed that two-thirds of all airline passengers want a ban on in-flight smoking; 64% said yes, 28% said no and 8% had no opinion. More specifically, the survey found that 74% of non-smokers and 30% of smokers want to fly smoke-free. Mr. Chairman, I ask that this study be inserted in the hearing record.

These results, as well as concerns about passenger safety, have prompted the American Association for Respiratory Care to ask commercial airlines for a voluntary smoking ban on all flights. In preparation for such a ban, the organization wants airline passengers to "go cold turkey" during the Thanksgiving Holiday.

AARC has asked the U.S. airlines to prohibit in-flight smoking from Wednesday, November 25, through Sunday, November 29, 1987. Because the Thanksgiving weekend is the most heavily

traveled period in the year, airlines could use this five-day trial to gauge passenger reaction to smoke-free flying.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the American Association for Respiratory Care appreciates having had the opportunity to present our views and our survey results concerning a smoking ban on airline aircraft.

I would also like to take this time to commend the Chairman's home state of California for taking the lead in this area by banning smoking on all intrastate air flights.

I would be pleased at this time to answer any questions members of the Subcommittee may have.