

Testimony of

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Patrick Reynolds. I am a grandson of R.J. Reynolds, founder of the tobacco company that today is RJR Nabisco. I am testifying today as a representative of Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights.

On behalf of the thousands of members of ANR across the United States for whom this is a critical health issue, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the legislation before you to eliminating smoking on airline flights.

Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights is a national organization which advocates the right of nonsmokers to breathe smokefree air in the workplace, on public transportation, in restaurants, and in other enclosed public places. ANR was founded in 1981 as Californians for Nonsmokers' Rights.

During the past six years, Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights has promoted the adoption of more than 200 state and local laws protecting nonsmokers from the health risks of passive smoking. When ANR was formed, there were scarcely any laws in the United States protecting nonsmokers in the workplace and public places. There was also a so-called "debate", fueled by the tobacco industry, about the health risks of secondhand smoke.

Since then, ANR has promoted hundreds of successful nonsmokers' rights laws across the country. And today, there is no longer a significant debate about the health risks of passive smoking. The jury is in. The verdict? According to the Surgeon General of the United States, "involuntary smoking is a cause of disease, including lung cancer, in healthy nonsmokers."

So the question today is not "do we have the necessary evidence to act to protect nonsmokers on aircraft and in other enclosed environments," but, "how much longer must we wait until the public health comes before the economic and political interests of the tobacco industry."

The ongoing activities of the tobacco industry opposing nonsmokers' rights legislation, and particularly the legislation before you today to eliminate smoking on airline flights, makes me wonder what my grandfather R.J. Reynolds would have felt today about the industry he helped create. Although it is not widely known, my grandfather was a nonsmoker. I am dismayed at the lengths to which the tobacco industry has gone to defeat reasonable protections for nonsmokers. Indeed, had my grandfather known of the risks of tobacco smoke, I believe he would have entered a different industry entirely.

For Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights and our members, the time is now for smokefree airline flight. The case against smoking on aircraft is iron clad.

There are 4600 toxic chemicals in secondhand tobacco smoke, including arsenic, formaldehyde, cyanide, ammonia, and carbon monoxide. Can breathing this toxic gas be good for anyone?

Although smokers may stay in the smoking section, smoke doesn't care what section it's in. Even if smoke could be persuaded to remain in the smoking section, aircraft air is primarily recycled, not fresh. Although environmental control systems on aircraft do filter the air, they are not adequate to remove the toxic chemicals in secondhand tobacco smoke.

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Knowing all this, it's not surprising that last year, the National Academy of Sciences recommended banning smoking on all domestic airline flights. In addition to the need to protect crew members and passengers from the risks of passive smoking, the NAS was also concerned with the possibility of fires caused by cigarettes and the need to bring cabin air quality into line with established standards for other enclosed environments.

At Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, our members have convinced us of the urgent need for the legislation before you. For many Americans flying is a miserable, or even impossible, experience because of tobacco smoke. We receive pleas for action from both flight attendants and passengers. Let me quote from one such letter to former Secretary of Transportation Dole from a couple in Texas:

"We would like to plead with you to make it possible for us to fly with our daughter.... [She] was born nine weeks early and spent her first many weeks in an intensive care unit.... Gloriously, she survived and, in fact has been fairly healthy the last two years.

"Unfortunately, she has had severe problems with asthma. Our family has always traveled a fair amount. In fact, [our daughter] was able to travel 20,000 miles by automobile to all parts of the U.S.A during her first year. However, the time limits in our lives have made it necessary for much more of our travel to be by plane. This, of course, means that [she] must be left behind.

"It is so sad to realize that [our daughter] will only get overseas if she takes a boat. Somehow this does not seem right to us."

Recent public opinion surveys demonstrate how much the public supports smokefree flight. When Air Canada prohibited smoking on many flights, they found that 96% of their passengers supported smokefree

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flight. The results inspired them to increase their smokefree service. And a recent poll of 33,000 airline passengers by the American Association for Respiratory Care indicated that 74% of nonsmokers and 30% of smokers want smokefree flight.

All of this supports what we believe - that catering to nonsmokers is good for business and the public health.

That nonsmokers will no longer take "no" for an answer was made clear by recent legislative events. In California, the home state of Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, legislation was enacted last month to eliminate smoking on airline flights and other means of public transportation within the state. The enormous public support for the historic legislation was evidenced by lopsided votes in the Democratically controlled legislature and signature by our Republican Governor.

At Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, we are constantly in contact with legislators and nonsmokers across the United States. From our experience, we know there is a growing awareness about the health risks of passive smoking and the need for legislation protecting the public health in this area. Clearly, the time has come for smokefree flight.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your today.

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