



New Poll finds strong, bipartisan support for statewide smoke-free law

Voters say employees' and customers' right to breathe smoke-free air most important

Sioux Falls & Rapid City, South Dakota—New poll results released today shows strong, bipartisan support all across South Dakota for a statewide smoke-free law. The poll found nearly two-thirds, 65 percent, of likely South Dakota voters support making all indoor workplaces smoke free including inside all restaurants, bars, hotel rooms, casinos and video lottery locations. What's more, 68 percent of respondents say the rights of employees and customers to breathe clean, smoke-free air are more important than the rights of smokers to smoke and business owners to allow smoking indoors.

"It's clear that people in South Dakota want to get the smoke out," said Dr. Allen Nord, Rapid City family physician and Chairman of the South Dakota Tobacco-Free Kids Network. "It doesn't matter if you're a Democrat or Republican, live in the Black Hills, Pierre, Sisseton or Sioux Falls, this poll reaffirms what we already know, that a strong majority of all South Dakotans want to go smoke free."

The poll, conducted by nationally recognized Public Opinion Strategies, also found that 80+ percent of people in South Dakota consider secondhand smoke to be a health hazard.

Exposure to secondhand smoke has been proven to increase the risk of lung cancer, heart disease and serious respiratory illnesses such as emphysema. It is also linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDSs) and a risk factor for premature births.

"South Dakota was once a leader in protecting employees and customers from the serious health effects of second-hand smoke, but we've fallen behind," said Nord. "Twenty-four other states, including Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska and Montana have all passed comprehensive statewide smoke free laws. It's time South Dakota did the same."

South Dakota currently has a limited smoke free workplace law. However, the law does not apply to restaurants, bars and other facilities that hold beer, wine or liquor licenses, video lottery establishments or Deadwood casinos. Smoke free advocates say today's poll along with the launch of a new website, www.smokefreesd.com, marks a new phase in the state's smoke free campaign. "IT'S TIME. A SMOKE FREE SOUTH DAKOTA." will focus on protecting the health of all workers by passing a comprehensive smoke free law covering all indoor workplaces in the state.

"Every worker—no matter where they work—deserves protection from secondhand smoke," said Nord. "Just because you work in a casino or a bar doesn't mean your health doesn't matter. No one should have to choose between their health and a paycheck."

The poll, commissioned by the South Dakota Tobacco-Free Kids Network with funding support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, interviewed a demographically representative sample of 500 registered likely voters. Results are similar to a 2005 poll that showed strong support for a statewide smoke free law.

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The South Dakota Tobacco-Free Kids Network is a statewide alliance of 53 health, medical, education, parent, youth, law enforcement and other civic organizations dedicated to advocating for laws, policies and funding of effective programs that will result in significant reductions in tobacco use and addiction, especially among children and other high risk groups.