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American Cancer Society Marks 31st Great American Smokeout With Call for [City/State] to Go Smoke-free

Smoke-free Policies Protect Workers From Deadly Secondhand Smoke and Help Smokers Quit

CITY, STATE – November 15, 2007 – The American Cancer Society today observed its 31st annual Great American Smokeout by urging **[local lawmakers, city council, mayor, etc.]** to protect the health of **[city/state]** workers and patrons and pass a comprehensive smoke-free law. **[Insert a sentence detailing the media event surrounding Great American Smokeout.]**

“Since the first Great American Smokeout in 1976, more than 2,300 communities and 21 states have granted their citizens the right to breathe smoke-free air, yet thousands in **[city/state]** remain exposed to secondhand smoke,” said **[SPOKESPERSON, TITLE]**. “It’s time for **[city/state]** lawmakers to take a stand for public health and pass a smoke-free law that will protect all **[city/state]** workers and patrons from this health hazard.”

In June of 2006, U. S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona released a report on the harmful effects of secondhand smoke and called on public policy makers to protect the health of workforce employees by enacting comprehensive smoke-free laws. The report concluded that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

An alarming study released by the *American Journal of Public Health* in June of 2007 found that elevated levels of a lung cancer-causing agent called NNK appeared in the urine of nonsmoking employees shortly after they encountered secondhand smoke during their shifts. Levels of NNK increased by 6 percent for each hour of work.

“Given what we know about the toxins in secondhand smoke, everyone deserves the right to breathe smoke-free air,” said **[SPOKESPERSON]**.

The American Cancer Society is working with **[coalition name/names of partners]** to **[INSERT LOCAL SMOKE-FREE LAW BACKGROUND or LOCAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS AS APPROPRIATE.]**

Comprehensive smoke-free policies not only protect workers and patrons from exposure to the 4,000 chemicals and more than 60 carcinogens in secondhand smoke, but they also encourage smokers to quit.

Smoke-free laws protect those most susceptible to the dangers of secondhand smoke—hotel, bar and restaurant workers, the elderly, children and people with certain health conditions. There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and even the most sophisticated ventilation system will not protect against poisonous toxins contained in secondhand smoke.

Smoke-free laws have been blazing a trail across America and across the world. There are now 21 smoke-free states that include both restaurants and bars in their public smoking laws. In the last year, Ohio, Arizona, New Mexico, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Oregon have gone smoke-free. Several countries have gone smoke-free, including England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and New Zealand. There are more than 2,300 city ordinances in the United States that restrict public smoking. New York City, Washington, D.C., and Houston are among the larger cities to recently go smoke-free.

Polls across the nation have consistently shown that about 70% of the public support smoke-free laws, including more than one-third of smokers.

It is estimated that secondhand smoke causes 35,000 to 40,000 deaths from heart disease and 3,000 lung cancer deaths in nonsmokers every year in this country.

The Great American Smokeout began 31 years ago as a platform to encourage smokers to quit. This platform has since expanded to include more candid dialogue about the importance of protecting Americans from exposure to deadly secondhand smoke via comprehensive smoke-free laws.

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States. For more information anytime, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

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