



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 20, 2009

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Movement on smokefree workplaces gets the ball rolling again

CSA encouraged by committee action, but pushes for no exemptions

LANSING, Mich. – Even though legislation approved today by the House Regulatory Reform Committee isn't what advocates ultimately want to see enacted, the Campaign for Smokefree Air was still pleased to see the issue start moving through the Legislature again.

Today, the committee approved House Bill 4377 sponsored by Rep. Lee Gonzales (D-Flint Township), creating smokefree workplaces, with exemptions for casinos, tobacco specialty shops and existing cigar bars. The bill was approved 9 -1.

"We were disappointed last year that the Legislature was not able to get this issue resolved, but with renewed interested and bipartisan support, we hope today's action is a sign of better things to come," said Katherine Knoll, CSA spokesperson and senior director of advocacy at the American Heart Association. "We're happy that Rep. Bert Johnson and his committee have started the ball rolling again this year, but we will continue fighting for all workplaces to be included. Our efforts are now focused on Speaker Dillon and the full House."

A poll released in March, conducted by Lansing-based EPIC/MRA, stated that two-thirds of voters were in favor of including casinos in the legislation. Sixty-four (64) percent said that casinos should be included in the law, agreeing that it is only fair that casino employees should have the same protection from secondhand smoke on the job as other workers.

There are currently 37 states, plus the District of Columbia, who have smokefree air laws. Both Wisconsin and North Carolina were added to the growing list of smokefree states just last week, leaving Michigan just one of 13 states who not have taken action. HB 4377 now goes to the full House for consideration.

About CSA

The Campaign for Smokefree Air is a grassroots coalition with more than 270 members, including leadership from the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association of Michigan, Michigan Health & Hospital Association, and Michigan State Medical Society, as well as other statewide groups that are committed to passing a smokefree workplace law. For more information about the Campaign for Smokefree Air, please visit www.MakeMIAirSmokefree.org.

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