

Legislative Update

June 8, 2006



Please read and forward to your colleagues and networks!

Senate Committee Hearing Scheduled for Next Week

We learned yesterday that the Senate Health Care Committee will hold a hearing next week to discuss a bill (HB 1133) that would make all areas of the General Assembly buildings smoke-free. The hearing has been scheduled for Wednesday, June 14 at 11 a.m. in room 544 of the Legislative Office Building. The NC Alliance for Health has been working closely with Rep. Rick Glazier (D-Fayetteville) and Senator William Purcell (D-Scotland) to lay the groundwork for this bill to be heard by the Senate Health Care Committee.

In its current form HB 1133 deals with county government criminal records checks. The primary House sponsor, Rep. Rick Glazier, is expected to offer a committee substitute to scrap the current bill and insert language to make the General Assembly buildings smoke-free. (For those of you interested in accessing the new version of HB 1133, it will not be available on the General Assembly's website until after the committee has heard the bill.)

If the bill receives a favorable report from the Senate Health Care Committee, it will likely be considered by the full Senate shortly thereafter.

Why is it important that the General Assembly buildings be 100% smoke-free?

Because secondhand smoke is harmful to health and everyone has a right to breathe smoke-free air. Consider the following:

- There are 500-600 full-time employees who work in the General Assembly buildings who deserve protection from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. House and Senate members made their chambers smoke-free in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Legislative employees deserve the same protection.
- General Assembly visitors deserve protection from secondhand smoke. Of the thousands of visitors to the buildings each year, a large portion of them are school-aged children. In 2005, 46,232 middle school students visited the General Assembly and 1146 high school students served as General Assembly pages for a week at a time.
- Every year secondhand smoke causes the deaths of 35,000 Americans^[i]. In North Carolina, 1,220 to 2,180 adults, children and babies die each year from others' smoking^[ii].
- Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke have been shown to have many of the same tobacco-related diseases as active smokers. Secondhand smoke has been shown to increase nonsmokers' risk of heart disease, stroke, and cancer³.

What can you do to help make the General Assembly buildings smoke-free?

- 1) Contact your senator and urge him or her to support efforts to make the General Assembly buildings smoke-free. All senators can be reached by calling 919-733-4111 and asking for your senator by name. If you are not sure of the name of your senator, check the General Assembly's website at:
http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/GIS/Representation/Who_Represents_Me/Who_Represents_Me.html

For a full set of talking points about the dangers of secondhand smoke, go to the Alliance website at: http://www.rtpnet.org/alliance/pdfs/general_assembly.pdf

- 2) Have your organization, its board members, staff and volunteers sign the Alliance's secondhand smoke resolution to demonstrate your support for making NC's worksites and public places smoke-free. Access the resolution by going to the Alliance's website at:
<http://www.rtpnet.org/alliance/resolution.html>

The website is now capable of taking signatures directly on-line. Also available on our website are fact sheets, talking points and other resources on secondhand smoke and the cigarette tax. Please take a moment to check out our new and improved website!

**Stay tuned for further developments on efforts to make
the General Assembly buildings smoke-free!**

**For additional information about secondhand smoke issues or NC's cigarette tax,
access the Alliance website at www.ncallianceforhealth.org
for talking points and other resources.**

Call 919-463-8328
or e-mail ncalliance@heart.org for more information

^[i] National Cancer Institute. *Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke*. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 10. Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute; 1999.

^[ii] Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids "The Toll of Tobacco in North Carolina" Fact Sheet, downloaded March 1, 2006 at:
<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/reports/settlements/toll.php?StateID=NC>