



SMOKE FREE NEW MEXICO
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The Smoke Clears as New Mexico Becomes the Nation's 17th Smoke-Free State

Free Materials Available to Help Business Owners Implement the Law and Free Cessation Support for Smokers

Albuquerque (June 15, 2007) –The Dee Johnson Clean Indoor Air Act, the statewide smoke-free law, went into effect at midnight today providing a healthier environment for all New Mexicans. The law requires the vast majority of New Mexico workplaces, including restaurants and bars, to be smoke-free indoors.

“This is a day that we have been happily awaiting for a long time,” stated Nathan Bush of the American Cancer Society. “Workers, children and people with breathing problems across the state will be protected from secondhand smoke and now have the freedom to breathe most places they go.”

“New Mexico is a leader in the progressive movement to protect people against the dangers of smoking,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “This type of ban is in effect in several states, and bars and restaurants have continued to prosper.” Data from cities in New Mexico have also indicated that there has been no economic loss as a result of smoke-free policies and in fact, gross receipts tax revenues have increased.

Enforcement will be provided by local fire, police and sheriff's departments or other government agencies provided for in local ordinances. "I do not anticipate any real problems," noted Chief Vince S. Mares of the City of Raton Police Department. "We have been working on a smoking ban with our local coalition, city officials and business owners since 2005 and have taken an aggressive approach in educating the public on the facts of the Dee Johnson Clean Indoor Air Act and have seen very little opposition."

“We fully expect most businesses will not hesitate to comply with the law, and that they will enjoy the benefits of smoke-free air right along with their customers – maybe even more so, once the economic side benefits become more apparent,” noted Julia Valdez of the American Heart Association. Substantiated economic benefits include lower cleaning costs, happier and healthier employees requiring less time off, and new customers who appreciate a smoke-free environment in which to dine or do business.

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Many restaurant and bar owners across the state are pleased that they can finally go smoke-free and not have to worry about the competition allowing smoking. A number of bar owners have indicated that they don't have any fears about the economic impact of the law. "I hope the statistics from other states and Ireland hold true and business increases for us and others, as I suspect it will," declared Robert O'Niell, owner of O'Niell's Pub in Albuquerque.

To help residents and business owners understand the new law, a website, www.SmokeFreeNM.com, and a toll-free number, 1-877-473-6624, are available to provide information and resources. "We have been working collaboratively with the New Mexico Department of Health to create a variety of free materials for business owners and managers to make it easy for them to comply with the law," stated Cynthia Serna, Director of New Mexicans Concerned About Tobacco.

Smoke-free policies have been proven to help smokers quit and the New Mexico Department of Health's 1-800-QUIT-NOW bilingual helpline is ready to provide smokers with free help. "We are seeing more New Mexicans ready to quit smoking since the Governor signed the smoking ban into law," said Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil. "We can help with free cessation services and nicotine replacement therapy for anyone who calls our help line."

This law is supported by an overwhelming majority of New Mexicans. Nearly 9 out of 10 New Mexico voters (87 percent) believe that all workers should be protected from exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace. This survey of 500 registered New Mexico voters was conducted by Research & Polling, Inc. in November 2006.

New Mexicans Concerned About Tobacco (NMCAT) was established in 1997 as a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations concerned about the health effects of tobacco on the people in our communities. Members include the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the New Mexico Medical Society and a network of over 2,500 grassroots advocates. The focus of NMCAT's efforts is to support policies that will reduce tobacco use.

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