



For Immediate Release
July 9, 2008

Contact: Amy Barkley 502-777-8148

NORTHERN KENTUCKY VOTERS SUPPORT SMOKEFREE WORKPLACES

*– Voters affirm the right to breathe clean air
inside all workplaces, including restaurants and bars –*

Covington (July 9, 2008) – A poll released today finds that voters from Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties support a law prohibiting smoking inside all workplaces, including restaurants and bars.

By a strong majority (65 percent to 33 percent), Northern Kentucky voters support a law prohibiting smoking “in most public places, including workplaces, public buildings, offices, restaurants and bars.” This support comes from a broad-based group of voters across the region, including Republicans, independents and Democrats and a majority of voters in Boone (72 percent), Kenton (61 percent) and Campbell (62 percent) counties. Half of all voters in the region (50 percent) *strongly* favor such a law. To view the poll results go to <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/pressoffice/kentuckypoll/2008/>

“Clearly, there is support for a smokefree law among Northern Kentucky voters,” said Joe Geraci, a volunteer for the American Cancer Society and Kenton County citizen. “A strong majority of voters feel that secondhand smoke is a health hazard, believe all workers should be protected from it, and would find restaurants and bars healthier and more enjoyable if they were smokefree.”

The survey of 750 voters was released today by the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association and the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. In releasing the results, the public health organizations called on the Fiscal Courts in Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties to make all workplaces smokefree, including all restaurants and bars.

“Voters recognize that exposure to secondhand smoke is a health hazard, and this poll demonstrates that they want a strong law protecting their rights and the rights of all workers to breathe clean air,” said Creighton B. Wright MD, FACS, FACC, a local cardiovascular and thoracic physician and volunteer for the American Heart Association. “We feel that the county governments should listen to the people and take action to pass a smokefree law, but it must be comprehensive to protect all workers and patrons from the dangers of secondhand smoke.” In addition to the support for a smokefree workplace law, other findings of the survey include:

- Voters understand the health hazards of secondhand smoke. Seventy-six (76) percent of voters feel that exposure to secondhand smoke is a serious (52 percent) or moderate (24 percent) health hazard.
- Voters feel all workers should be protected from secondhand smoke. Seventy-nine (79) percent of Northern Kentucky voters agree that all workers should be protected from exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace.

- Voters place priority on the right of employees and customers to breathe clean air in restaurants and bars. Concerns about exposure to secondhand smoke translate to the very strong belief among voters (by a margin of 64 percent to 29 percent) that the right of employees and customers to breathe clean air in restaurants and bars is more important than the right of smokers to smoke and owners to allow smoking in these places.

Northern Kentucky voters also feel that the region's hospitality establishments would be healthier and more enjoyable if they were smokefree. Eight out of 10 voters (83 percent) believe that these places would be healthier under a smokefree law, and 80 percent want to be able to enjoy restaurants and bars in their community without smelling like smoke at the end of the evening.

In 2006, former U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona released a landmark report on secondhand smoke. The report confirmed that exposure to secondhand smoke causes cancer, heart disease and serious lung ailments. Secondhand smoke contains dozens of carcinogens and more than 4,000 chemicals, including formaldehyde, cyanide, carbon monoxide and arsenic. As Surgeon General Carmona stated when releasing the report, "The debate is over. The science is clear. Secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance but a serious health hazard."

The Surgeon General's Report concluded that, "Establishing smokefree workplaces is the only effective way to ensure that secondhand smoke exposure does not occur in the workplace." Geraci stated, "The report's conclusions make the need for strong and immediate action clear: No one should have to choose between their job and their health. Everyone has the right to breathe clean, smokefree air."

As the Surgeon General's Report concludes, the evidence is also clear that smokefree laws protect health without harming business. Dozens of studies and hard economic data have shown that smokefree laws do not harm sales or employment in restaurants and bars.

The growing evidence that secondhand smoke harms health, but smokefree laws do not harm business, has spurred the growing, bipartisan momentum across the country to pass smokefree laws. Sixteen Kentucky communities have passed smokefree laws. In the United States, 24 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico have passed smokefree laws that cover restaurants and bars. The states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont and Washington.

To view an electronic press kit including a summary of the poll results and color slides visit:
<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/pressoffice/kentuckypoll/2008/>

Public Opinion Strategies conducted the telephone survey of voters in Boone, Kenton, and Campbell Counties. The survey was completed June 3-5, 2008 among 250 registered voters in each county. The data was then weighted in proportion to voter registration figures as follows: 31% Boone County (N=232), 25% Campbell County (N=187), 44% Kenton County (N=330). The overall survey has a margin of error of +3.58% in 95 out of 100 cases. The margin of error is higher for subgroups.

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