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74% of North Carolina Voters Support State's Smoke-Free Law

Law popular with Republicans, Democrats, Independents, and Tea Party Supporters

Raleigh, NC – A new poll released today by a coalition of public health groups finds 74 percent of North Carolina voters support the state's one and a half year old smoke-free law. The survey of 500 likely voters was released by the North Carolina Alliance for Health.

The poll found support for the smoke-free law cuts across party lines, including 78 percent of Democrats, 68 percent of Republicans and 71 percent of Independent voters. Among those who have a favorable view of the "Tea Party", 61 percent support keeping the law.

"These results show what we have always known – North Carolinians understand secondhand smoke is a serious health hazard, and they don't want their right to breathe clean air taken away," said Pam Seamans, Executive Director of the North Carolina Alliance for Health, the coalition that led the efforts to get the smoke-free legislation passed in 2009. "Although some special interests may not like the smoke-free law, it is clear the people of North Carolina overwhelmingly support being free from the toxic effects of secondhand smoke. This is one issue that unites North Carolinians across the political spectrum." A bill to repeal substantial parts of the state's smoke-free law (SB 469) was introduced on March 30 of this year.

Among North Carolina voters the survey also found:

- 55 percent are less likely to vote for candidates who wanted to weaken the law
- 77 percent view exposure to secondhand smoke as a health hazard
- 82 percent believe it is important for bars and restaurants to have a smoke-free environment

Polling firm Public Opinion Strategies conducted the survey February 8-10, 2011. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 4.38 percentage points.

In May 2009, North Carolina became the 26th state to pass a smoke-free law that protects workers and the public from the serious health hazards of secondhand smoke in public places and hospitality venues. The law went into effect on January 2, 2010.

“Secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, including at least 69 carcinogens, and the evidence is clear that smoke-free laws protect health without harming business. As the U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona concluded in 2006, ‘Evidence from peer-reviewed studies shows that smoke-free policies and regulations do not have an adverse impact on the hospitality industry,’” said Seamans. “The need and public support for protection from secondhand smoke in all workplaces and public places has never been clearer.”

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BACKGROUND:

North Carolina Alliance for Health:

The North Carolina Alliance for Health is an independent, statewide coalition of public, private, professional and nonprofit organizations advocating for obesity and tobacco use prevention policies before North Carolina's legislative and executive branches. Alliance members and partners include the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Lung Association, NC Pediatric Society, NC Prevention Partners, NC Association of Local Health Directors , State Employees Association of NC, March of Dimes, American Diabetes Association, the NC Health Access Coalition, the Covenant with NC's Children, AARP, the Council of Churches, the Christian Action League and many others. For further information about the North Carolina Alliance for Health and its policy priorities, contact Pam Seamans at (919) 949-5992 or pamseamans@nc.rr.com .