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It's Time.

Bill Introduced to Protect All Workers from Secondhand Smoke

PIERRE, SD – Republican Majority Leaders Senator Dave Knudson and Representative Bob Faehn introduced Senate Bill 83 to strike the exemptions to the state's smoke free worksite law and protect all workers from the hazards of secondhand smoke. Senate Bill 83 would make all indoor worksites smoke free, including restaurants, bars, Deadwood casinos, video lottery establishments, hotels, and tobacco retail stores. Senate Bill 83 is co-sponsored by Democrat Minority Leaders Senator Scott Heidepriem and Representative Bernie Hunhoff, giving the proposal bi-partisan, leadership support.

"Secondhand smoke is a serious health hazard to South Dakota workers and we are pleased our legislative leaders believe everyone deserves the right to breathe clean air no matter where they work," said Jennifer Stalley, Project Director for the South Dakota Tobacco Free Kids Network.

"Our statewide smoke free law, as written, has major exemptions that leave a number of our workers and members of the public unprotected from the dangers of exposure to secondhand smoke," According to Stalley. "No worker should have to choose between their paycheck and their health. It's time the Legislature acts to protect the public's health." Senate Bill 83 is supported by the 54 member organizations of the South Dakota Tobacco Free Kids Network.

The current state law, enacted July 1, 2002, prohibits smoking in most public places and worksites but exempts any restaurant with an alcohol license, bar, video lottery establishment, Deadwood casino, hotel sleeping room or tobacco retail shop. "Several categories of workers remain unprotected from secondhand smoke where they earn a living," according to Stalley, "workers that often earn lower wages and are less likely to have health benefits."

In June 2006, U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona concluded that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke have increased risk for heart disease and lung cancer. Dr. Allen Nord, Chairman of the Network, said, "The scientific evidence is now indisputable; secondhand smoke is a serious health hazard and no level of exposure is deemed acceptable in the workplace."

According to Nord, "The exemptions to the current law represent a severe health risk for anyone who works in, dines in or visits any one of the exempted locations. Whether a doctor or a disc jockey, a teacher or a technician, every worker has the right to breathe clean air. Now that the debate about the dangers of secondhand smoke is over, it's time to protect all South Dakotans from secondhand smoke."

Other sponsors of the legislation representing districts across the state include:

Senator Stan Adelstein, (R-Rapid City)
Senator Tom Dempster, (R-Sioux Falls)
Senator Tom Hansen, (R-Huron)
Senator Jean Hunhoff, (R-Yankton)
Senator Kathy Miles, (D-Sioux Falls)
Senator Ben Nesselhuf (D-Vermillion)

Representative Blake Curd, MD (R-Sioux Falls)
Representative Joni Cutler (R-Sioux Falls)
Representative Marc Feinstein, (D-Sioux Falls)
Representative Larry Lucas, (D-Mission)
Representative Ed McLaughlin (R-Rapid City)
Representative Carol Pitts (R-Brookings)
Representative Tim Rave, (R-Baltic)
Representative Jaqueline Sly (R-Rapid City)
Representative Bill Thompson (D-Sioux Falls)
Representative Larry Tidemann, (R-Brookings)

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The South Dakota Tobacco-Free Kids Network is a statewide alliance of 54 health, medical, education, parent, youth, law enforcement and other civic organizations dedicated to advocating for laws, policies and funding of effective programs that will result in significant reductions in tobacco use and addiction, especially among children and other high risk groups.

www.smokefreesd.com