



Smoke-Free News

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

MARCH 20, 2009

April meeting schedule:

Come to the location and time most convenient for you. The same agenda is presented at each location.

Cannon Falls

Tuesday April 7, 2009

6:30 to 7:30 pm

Cannon Falls Library
306 West Mill Street, Cannon Falls

Red Wing

Wednesday April 8, 2009

Noon to 1:00 pm

(Brown bag lunch meeting. Bring your own lunch, bottled water is provided.)

Fairview Red Wing Professional & Community Center
1407 West 4th Street, Red Wing

Kenyon

Thursday April 9, 2009

6:30 to 7:30 pm

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
309 Forest Street, Kenyon

Smoke-free cars

A bill in the Minnesota Senate to prohibit smoking in cars when children are present passed two committee hearings before failing to pass in the Transportation Committee. It is not clear if the House version of this bill will receive any hearings. Representative Tim Kelly is one of the authors of the House bill.



On March 3, 2009, ten members of Citizens for a Smoke-free Goodhue County traveled to the State Capitol. We met with Senator Steve Murphy (photo), Representative Tim Kelly and Representative Steve Drazkowski. We asked them to oppose any attempts to weaken our smoke-free law. The people who made the trip came from Cannon Falls, Red Wing, Wanamingo, and Zumbrota. See more photos at: www.smokefreegc.org

More attempts to weaken our smoke-free law

S. F. No. 270/H. F. No. 257
“Smoking permitted in certain bars”
S. F. No. 898/ (no House version)
“Smoking in employee rooms authorization”

Two bills have been introduced in the Minnesota legislature that would weaken our smoke-free law, the Freedom to Breathe Act. These bills have been referred to the House and Senate Health Committees. Neither bill is expected to be scheduled for a hearing. Without a hearing, these bills cannot come up for a vote in the full House or Senate.

Look for the same authors to reintroduce the same language as floor amendments to other bills toward the end of this session. This is how the House passed the “Smoking Shack amendment” during last year’s session.

We can’t take smoke-free air for granted. Your support is still needed! If you would like to be added to our e-mail Action Alert list, visit www.smoke-freegc.org and click on “Contact Us”. Be a participant in democracy and help keep Minnesota smoke-free!

HOW TO CONTACT US

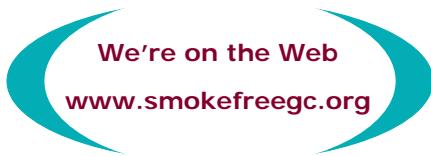
Tom Wolff
Goodhue County Public Health Service
Phone: (651) 385-6142
or toll free (800) 950-2142
E-mail: tom.wolff@co.goodhue.mn.us

Susan Johnson
Goodhue County Public Health Service
Phone: (651) 385-6157
E-mail: susan.johnson@co.goodhue.mn.us



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Red Wing, MN 55066

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Neighboring states update

Wisconsin – Governor Jim Doyle has made a comprehensive smoke-free law part of his budget proposal. His party controls both chambers of the state legislature. Smoke-free advocates are optimistic that this will be the year Wisconsin goes smoke-free. Opponents are hoping they can get support to add exceptions for bars or to delay the start of the law.

South Dakota – Bills for a comprehensive smoke-free law have passed the House and Senate. They need to reach agreement on some minor differences before the final bill is sent to Governor Mike Rounds.

North Dakota – The House voted to reject a bill for a comprehensive smoke-free law. The bill may end up as a ballot initiative in the 2010 election.

How much does tobacco really cost?



Get more information:
www.weallpaytheprice.com

Each year more than 5,500 Minnesotans die from disease caused by tobacco use. The average price for a pack of cigarettes in Minnesota is \$4.24. Each pack smoked costs an estimated \$8.85 in medical expenses and lost productivity. Treating disease caused by smoking costs Minnesota nearly \$2 billion in health care costs annually. This impacts the cost for health insurance and State of Minnesota Health Care Programs. Whether you smoke or not, smoking affects us all.

Federal tobacco tax increase

On February 4, 2009, President Obama signed the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) into law. SCHIP is a federal health program for children whose parents earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but who can't afford private insurance. Part of the funding for this program

will come from an increase of 61 cents per pack in the federal sales tax on cigarettes. The increase will take effect on March 31, 2009. Experience has shown that an increase in the cost of cigarettes will encourage smokers to quit and discourage prospective smokers, especially youth, from starting to smoke.