A Dozen States Fail to Provide Protection from Secondhand Smoke

Debra Miller [1]

Twenty four states and the District of Columbia were given an A by the American Lung Association last week because they had comprehensive smokefree air laws. On the other hand, twelve states received a failing grade in the “State of Tobacco Control: 2012” [2] report. The remainder of the states scored somewhere between an A and a F.

The grading system for smokefree air is based on whether states had adopted laws that protected against secondhand smoke in public settings, including government and private workplaces, schools, child care facilities, restaurants, bar and taverns, casinos and gaming establishments, retail stores, and recreational and cultural facilities.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, “there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Any exposure to tobacco smoke – even occasional exposure to secondhand smoke – is harmful.” Secondhand smoke causes an estimated 50,000 deaths each year mostly from lung cancer and coronary heart disease.

Besides providing state grades on smokefree air, the American Lung Association report also reviews state policies on cigarette excise taxes [3], tobacco prevention and control spending [4] and cessation programs [5]. The report also looks at federal policy [6] directed at tobacco control.

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