



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2007

CONTACT:

Cathleen Smith Grzesiek
American Heart Association

Terry Hargrove
American Lung Association
of Virginia

Keenan Caldwell
American Cancer Society

VIRGINIANS FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE COMMENDS SENATE FOR PASSING SMOKE FREE LEGISLATION

RICHMOND, VA (February 1, 2007) – The American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Lung Association of Virginia applaud the Virginia Senate for passing legislation today making all workplaces, including restaurants, smoke free. Senate Bill 1161, introduced by Senator Brandon Bell of Roanoke, prohibits smoking in most indoor public places and passed the Senate by a vote of (?).

"Every Virginian has the right to breathe smoke free air, whether indoors or outside. I applaud my colleagues for passing a comprehensive bill that will protect our citizens from harmful secondhand smoke," said Senator Bell.

Secondhand smoke is responsible for the deaths of 38,000 Americans each year. In June of 2006, the U.S. Surgeon General released a report on secondhand exposure and declared that it is "not a mere annoyance. It is a serious health hazard..." The report found that secondhand smoke exposure increases a nonsmokers' risk for heart disease and lung cancer by as much as 30 percent. For children, it can cause sudden infant death syndrome, asthma attacks, and other respiratory problems. The findings also concluded that the only way to fully protect employees from secondhand smoke exposure was through the establishment of smoke free workplaces.

This legislation will now be referred to the Virginia House of Delegates.

"Virginians for a Healthy Future commends the Senate for taking the indisputable evidence regarding health consequences of secondhand smoke exposure and acting upon it," said Cathleen Smith Grzesiek, director of public policy for the American Heart Association and chair of Virginians for a Healthy Future. "It is critical to the health of Virginia's workers and residents that House of Delegates does the same and passes comprehensive smoke free indoor air legislation."

Virginians for a Healthy Future is a coalition of community organizations and individuals working to prevent and reduce death and disease caused by tobacco use. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in Virginia. Learn more about the health effects of secondhand smoke and the benefits of cleaning up our air by visiting our website at: www.smokefreevanow.org

###