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ST. LOUIS CITY RESIDENTS STRONGLY SUPPORT SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACES

Community coalition launches effort to protect everyone's right to breathe clean air

St. Louis – Today, [Smoke-Free St. Louis City](#), released polling results regarding voter attitudes toward secondhand smoke and policy change. This group is a broad-based coalition of residents, organizations, and businesses dedicated to raising awareness of the dangers of secondhand smoke and the need for a smoke-free St. Louis City,

New poll results released today show strong support across St. Louis City for smoke-free workplaces. By nearly a two-to-one margin (61 percent to 36 percent), City residents support prohibiting smoking “in most indoor public places, including all workplaces, public buildings, offices, restaurants, bars and casinos.” This support comes from a diverse group of residents across the city. Half of all residents (50 percent) *strongly* favor such a law.

“Clearly, there is strong support for smoke-free policy change among St. Louis City residents,” said Jason Vander Weele, Coalition Coordinator for Smoke-Free St. Louis City. “A solid majority feel that secondhand smoke is a health hazard, believe all workers should be protected from it, and would find restaurants, bars and casinos healthier and more enjoyable if they were smoke-free.”

In 2006, the U.S. Surgeon General released a landmark report on secondhand smoke. The report confirmed that exposure to secondhand smoke causes cancer, heart disease and serious lung ailments. Secondhand smoke contains dozens of carcinogens and more than 4,000 chemicals, including formaldehyde, cyanide, carbon monoxide and arsenic. As the Surgeon General put it, “The debate is over. The science is clear. Secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance but a serious health hazard.”

The citywide survey of 500 registered voters was released by Smoke-Free St. Louis City, a coalition of nearly 1000 individuals and over 30 community groups and businesses. The survey was commissioned by the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association and Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids with additional funding support from the Missouri Foundation for Health and the Americans for Nonsmokers Rights Foundation.

Based on the polling results, support for the smoke-free policy is also solid; opposition arguments do little to sway those surveyed. After hearing arguments on both sides of the issue, City residents

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continue to favor a smoke-free ordinance by a wide margin (62 percent favor to 36 percent oppose).

In addition to support for smoke-free workplaces, other findings of the survey include:

- Residents understand the health hazards of secondhand smoke. More than three out of four feel that exposure to secondhand smoke is a serious (56 percent) or moderate (22 percent) health hazard.
- Residents feel all workers should be protected from secondhand smoke. 81 percent agree all workers in the city should be protected from exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace.
- Many said they would be more likely to visit restaurants, bars and casinos if a smoke-free policy is enacted. The intention to go out more is not surprising given that 8 out of 10 believe these places would be healthier if smoke-free, and 76% want to be able to enjoy restaurants, bars and casinos in their community without smelling like smoke at the end of the evening.

Smoke-free policies are the simplest and most cost effective way to improve a community's health - results include: reduced exposure to secondhand smoke among workers and the public, increased successful quit attempts, and reinforce efforts to reduce tobacco use among children. Secondhand smoke is a serious public health concern that can be addressed by making public places smoke-free.

To learn more visit, www.smokefreestl.org

The Mellman Group conducted a survey of 500 registered voters in St. Louis City July 14-17, 2008. The margin of error for this survey is +/-4.4% at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error is higher for subgroups.

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