

March 27, 2014

To: Senate Health and Welfare
From: Rebecca Ryan, American Lung Association
RE: In Support of H.217

Smokefree Vehicles, Smokefree Kids

*Pass legislation to protect children from secondhand smoke;
Prohibit smoking in vehicles in the presence of children **under 18**.*

What is the Status in Vermont?

- In Vermont, smoking is **not permitted** in vehicles that transport foster children.¹
- 5,900 (15%) Vermont adult smokers with children **do not** ban smoking in their vehicles.²
- In the past week, 1 out of 3 Vermont youth were in a car with someone who smoked.³
- 81% of Vermonters support banning smoking in vehicles in the presence of children.⁴

“Frankly, I become angry at the thought of innocent children being subjected to this hazard. Our children cannot protect themselves from this danger, so the burden falls on us. I am calling on this important piece of legislation to quickly become a reality.”

-Nevin Zablotsky, D.M.D., South Burlington, VtDigger, February 2014

Do Other Jurisdictions Ban Smoking? Yes!

- Smoking in cars with children is banned in six states: Arkansas, Louisiana, California, Maine, Washington, Oregon, Puerto Rico and in many municipalities.
- Smoking will be banned in vehicles carrying children in the United Kingdom next year. It is banned in Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Cypress & South Africa.

Does Banning Smoking in Vehicles Work? Yes!

- Smokefree car & home rules were significantly higher after the passage of Maine’s smokefree vehicle law in 2008.
- Smoking bans in cars in Canadian provinces have reduced children’s exposure to secondhand smoke by 33%.

How Would this Law be Enforced?

- Current proposals (H.70 and H.217) would amend the motor vehicle operation statute (V.S.A. 23) so would be enforced the same as other moving violations. It is a primary offense that is subject to a fine of up to \$100.00 and no points.

¹ Licensing Regulations for Foster Care, Vermont Department of Children and Families, Family Division, Physical Environment, General Safety and Maintenance, 403 (2005).

² Vermont Adult Tobacco Survey, 2012.

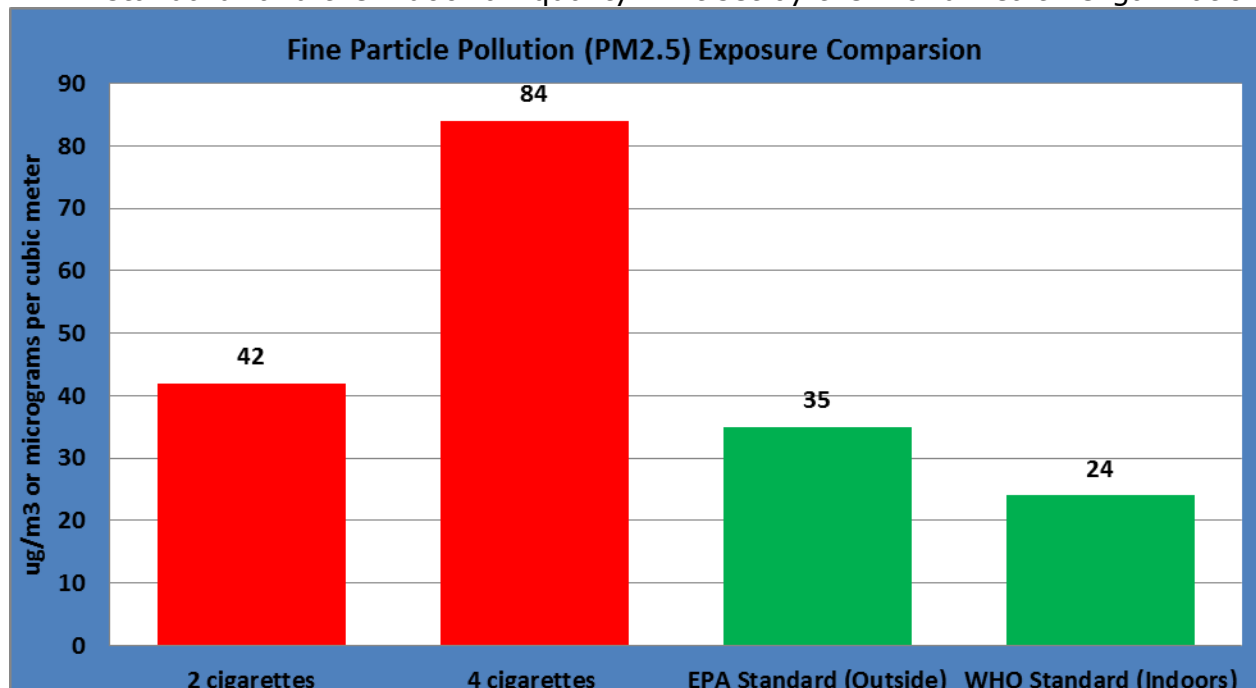
³ Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 2013.

⁴ Vermont Department of Health, Macro Poll, conducted April 2012.

- And like other traffic laws, most Vermonters will comply. For example, 91% of Vermonters nearly always or always wear a seatbelt⁵ even though not wearing one is a secondary offense.
- Like banning the use of portable electronic devices and requiring a seatbelt, driving a smokefree vehicle will save healthcare dollars and lives. In 2009, Vermont asthma-related emergency room visits and hospitalizations topped \$7 million alone.

How Dangerous is Secondhand Smoke Exposure in a Vehicle? Very!

- Secondhand smoke (SHS) is a cancer-causing substance with no known safe level.⁶ Smoking by parents is associated with a wide range of adverse effects in their children: causes/exacerbates asthma, and increases the risk of middle ear infections, bronchitis, pneumonia and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).⁷ More than 87% of all lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke. *Even brief secondhand smoke exposure can damage cells in ways that set the cancer process in motion.*
- According to a study from the Harvard School of Public Health, "alarming" levels of SHS were generated in just under five minutes in vehicles under various driving, ventilation and smoking conditions.⁸
- Smoking in cars raises levels of fine particulates (PM2.5) that exceed the US EPA standard⁹ and the indoor air quality limit set by the World Health Organization.



For more information, contact Rebecca Ryan, American Lung Association, rryan@lungne.org or 802-876-6862

⁵ Vermont Adult Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, January 2013.

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2006.*

⁷ California Environmental Protection Agency. Proposed Identification of Environmental Tobacco Smoke as a Toxic Air Contaminant, June 2005.

⁸ Rees V and Connolly G. *Measuring Air Quality to Protect Children from Secondhand Smoke in Cars*, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, November 2006.

⁹ Ott W., Klepsis N., Switzer P., Air change rates of motor vehicles and in-vehicle pollutant concentrations from secondhand smoke, Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology (2007), 1-14.