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CONTACT:
Tim Filler, 317-652-6483
Kristiane Silva, 317-657-4184
Dan Cronin 202-481-9332

70% of Indianapolis Voters Support Law Making Bars, Restaurants And Other Workplaces Smoke-Free

Voters back measure to protect workers and customers from secondhand smoke

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 21, 2010) – A new poll released today finds that 70 percent of Indianapolis voters support passing a law to make all restaurants, bars and other workplaces smoke-free. The poll shows broad support for the law, including large majorities of men and women, whites and African-Americans, and Democrats and Republicans across Indianapolis.

“Now is the time for the City-County Council and Mayor to reconsider what a significant majority of Indianapolis voters desire - to have all restaurants, bars, and other workplaces be smoke-free. Voters agree that Indianapolis should protect all of its workers and customers from harmful secondhand smoke and join the growing list of great cities that have gone smoke-free,” said Vincent C. Caponi, CEO, St. Vincent Health.

The survey of 500 likely Indianapolis voters was released by Smoke Free Indy and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Smoke Free Indy is a coalition of public health organizations, community-based groups, physicians, businesses, schools, the faith community, and Marion County residents.

By a 70 percent to 27 percent margin, the poll found that voters support a law in Indianapolis that would prohibit smoking in most public places, including workplaces, public buildings, offices, bowling alleys, restaurants and bars. This includes fifty-six percent who **strongly** favor the law. Support cuts across party lines, including 63 percent of Republicans, 67 percent of Independents and 78 percent of Democrats.

The survey also found among Indianapolis voters:

- By a margin of 62 to 27 percent, voters are more likely to support a candidate who supports the smoke-free law over one who opposes it
- 84 percent believe that secondhand smoke is a health hazard, including 58 percent who say it is a serious health hazard.

- 72 percent believe that the right of customers and employees to breathe clean air in restaurants and bars is more important than the right of smokers to smoke and businesses owners to allow smoking.
- 80 percent believe all workers should be protected from exposure to secondhand smoke.
- 86 percent say bar and restaurant workers have the same right to breathe clean air as office employees.

“Voters recognize what the Surgeon General’s report found, that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and they want a strong law that protects their right and the right of all workers to breathe clean air. People across Indianapolis understand that it is wrong to force workers to choose between their jobs and their health,” said Dr. Ray Henderson, currently practicing cardiologist and Immediate Past President, Indiana Black Expo Board of Directors.

To date, 550 cities across the country have passed smoke-free laws that include restaurants and bars. Of the 20 largest U.S. cities, 15 are protected by such laws. Indianapolis is one of the five that are not.

The need for protection from secondhand smoke in all workplaces and public places has never been clearer. Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including at least 69 carcinogens. The U.S. Surgeon General has found that secondhand smoke causes lung cancer, heart disease, serious respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis, low birth weight and sudden infant death syndrome. The Surgeon General has also found that secondhand smoke causes tens of thousands of deaths in the U.S. each year, there is no safe level of exposure, and only smoke-free laws provide effective protection from secondhand smoke.

The evidence is also clear that smoke-free laws protect health without harming business. As the U.S. Surgeon General concluded in a 2006 report, “Evidence from peer-reviewed studies shows that smoke-free policies and regulations do not have an adverse impact on the hospitality industry.”

The survey was conducted by the polling firm Public Opinion Strategies. The poll has a sample of 500 registered likely Indianapolis voters and was conducted July 8 and 11, 2010. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 4.38 percentage points.

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