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Happy New Year to Smokefree Oregon

Oregon's Smokefree Workplace Law Extends to Bars, Bingo Halls and Bowling Centers at Midnight on Dec. 31

Portland, Ore. — Starting at midnight on New Year's Eve, Oregon's Smokefree Workplace Law will protect nearly every Oregon employee from the health risks of secondhand smoke. The new law covers bars, bingo halls and bowling centers, as well as 75 percent of hotel and motel sleeping rooms and all employee breakrooms. In addition, every Oregon business will be required to maintain a 10-foot smokefree zone around doors, windows and ventilation systems.

"Every Oregonian benefits from this law," said Dr. Bruce Goldberg, director of the Oregon Department of Human Services. "Employees will be able to punch in without endangering their health, businesses will save money on maintenance and sick time costs and the public will have more smokefree choices. Laws like this are proven to help smokers quit. This is a monumental change for Oregonians."

Oregonians strongly support the new law, passed by the 2007 Oregon Legislature. Surveys show that 90 percent of Oregonians, including 76 percent of smokers, prefer smokefree indoor workplaces, and 86 percent say employees should be protected from secondhand smoke.

Many businesses support the new law as well. A recent survey showed that 66 percent of businesses affected by the new law are already smokefree. Many other businesses have been preparing for the change all year, including some that opted to go smokefree in advance of the law and others that are ready to celebrate as the law takes effect.

All Oregonians benefit from cleaner air, but businesses have their own reasons to celebrate, as they are likely to reap the rewards of a productive workplace including healthier workers, fewer sick days and reduced cleaning costs. They also stand to gain new customers from among the 80 percent of Oregonians who don't smoke. Many businesses are using the new law as an opportunity to reupholster furniture and install new carpet to get rid of smoke damage.

Business owners are responsible for complying with the law and preventing smoking in and around their property. Employees and the public can help ensure that the law is followed by reporting violations, beginning Jan. 1, by calling 1-866-621-6107 or completing an online complaint form at www.healthoregon.org/smokefree. The Oregon Public Health Division will investigate complaints and give citations to business owners who are unwilling to comply with the law.

The law provides an incentive for employees and customers who smoke to quit. Seventy-five percent of smokers in Oregon want to kick the habit, and a smokefree workplace is a proven way to help people go smokefree for good. Oregon's Quit Line is

a free service available to all Oregonians at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or 1-877-2NO-FUME. Also many private insurance plans cover cessation support, proven to make attempts to quit more successful. Smokers should ask their providers for information.

Tobacco prevention in Oregon

Tobacco takes a tremendous toll on Oregon. Tobacco contributed to 22 percent of all deaths in the state in 2005, making Oregon residents four times more likely to die from tobacco-related causes than from motor vehicle accidents, suicide, AIDS and homicide *combined*. The direct medical expenditures and the indirect cost of lost productivity due to premature death from tobacco-related causes costs Oregonians more than \$2 billion a year. Lawmakers believe that through reducing secondhand smoke exposure, and by making it harder to smoke in public places, Oregon can prevent tobacco-related illness and death—something good for all Oregonians and Oregon businesses.

The Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP) works with local health departments, tribes, schools and community organizations to deliver a comprehensive tobacco prevention program to all Oregon residents. Program activities are based on evidence-based strategies to reduce and prevent tobacco use. For more information, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/tobacco/>.

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