

# Common Questions about Restoring Local Control

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## **Why is it important to allow local government to protect their citizens from secondhand smoke?**

Secondhand smoke is deadly, causing lung cancer and heart disease. Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk of contracting bronchitis, pneumonia and asthma.

## **What are the advantages of having local control?**

Local control is a powerful tool that allows communities to educate on the real risks of secondhand smoke and find locally-appropriate, common-sense solutions for protecting health. Local standards are easier to enforce because they emerge from a community discussion about what works best for that area.

Communities in other states that set local standards have seen benefits beyond reducing secondhand smoke exposure. When protections against secondhand smoke are in place, people smoke fewer cigarettes. And the increased awareness about tobacco leads to more people quitting. This leads to a significant improvement in the community's overall health.

Tobacco kills 6,400 Louisiana residents every year and drains \$2.8 billion from the state economy in direct medical costs and lost productivity. Local control will allow Louisiana to begin reducing this toll.

## **Why does the current law prohibit local government from protecting residents from secondhand smoke?**

Internal tobacco industry documents show that removing local government's ability to protect indoor air quality was the number-one priority of the tobacco industry in the early to mid-1990s.

In 1993, the Louisiana State Legislature passed a "Clean Indoor Air" law that provided virtually no protection from secondhand smoke in most public places and workplaces. Tobacco lobbyists helped secure a provision in the law that prohibits local government from establishing any protections beyond what the weak state law provides.

## **Why is Big Tobacco so opposed to local control of indoor air quality?**

The tobacco industry vigorously opposes local control because having more smoke-free environments means smokers consume fewer cigarettes over the course of the day. The industry also knows that children are influenced by seeing adults smoking around them. Surveys have found that kids think most adults smoke, even though only about one-quarter of adults are actually smokers. Unfortunately, as our children grow up, they are more likely to model their behavior on what they see as the social norm among adults.

## **Commonly Asked Questions about Local Control, continued**

### **Do other states have local control?**

Most other states, including Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas, allow municipal government to establish local standards for protecting residents from secondhand smoke. While communities in these states are educating on tobacco's risks and developing standards to protect health, Louisiana communities are frozen out of the process.

### **What types of ordinances could municipalities pass if given the right?**

The most common local standards across the country cover smoke-free government buildings, child care centers, workplaces and restaurants.

### **Won't having different local ordinances be confusing?**

Other states have not experienced problems with different standards. Local government already has the authority to set its own rules on a variety of subject matters. Local control works because it allows a community to have a discussion about the risks of secondhand smoke and develop a solution that fits the area.

### **How can I get involved?**

The Coalition for Tobacco-Free Louisiana is working to restore local control in the 2003 legislative session. We need your help in this effort. We encourage you to:

- Urge your legislators to support the restoration of local control for clean indoor air.
- Ask your elected local government officials to sign the Coalition's petition to restore local control. To obtain a copy of the petition, contact the Coalition.
- The Coalition is working with city, village, and town councils and police juries across Louisiana to approve resolutions urging the legislature to restore local control. Contact the Coalition about getting a resolution passed in your area.
- Become a member of the Coalition for Tobacco-Free Louisiana.

**Contact the Coalition for Tobacco-Free Louisiana:  
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