Report Shows Growth of Smoke-Free Air Laws Worldwide; More Than 200 Million Found "Fully Protected"

Atlanta 2007/05/30 -A new report released today documents the explosive growth of smoke-free air laws worldwide and finds that more than 200 million people are now protected by laws that require smoke-free air in workplaces and public places. The report concludes that the momentum behind smoke-free air laws will continue accelerating because a global treaty ratified by 146 nations requires governments to protect the public from secondhand smoke.

The report, Global Voices for a Smokefree World, was released today by the Global Smokefree Partnership, a new multi-partner initiative formed to promote effective smoke-free air policies worldwide, to coincide with the World Health Organization's World No Tobacco Day, which focuses attention this year on the importance of smoke-free air.

"Great progress is being made globally in protecting people from the harms of secondhand smoke. Whole countries are going smoke-free one after another, and the laws are proving to be a huge success," said John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society. "Countries like Ireland and Uruguay are leading the way, and we're seeing real action now."

The report shows that nine countries have laws that require smoke-free air in workplaces, including all restaurants, bars and pubs: Ireland, Uruguay, New Zealand, Bermuda, Iran, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. England's law takes effect July 1. France, Italy, South Africa and Hong Kong have implemented smoke-free laws covering most workplaces. In the United States, 9 states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. have implemented laws covering all workplaces, including restaurants and bars, and three more states have passed laws that will take effect over the next year.

Smoke-free air laws outside the United States are getting a boost from the world's first public health treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The FCTC is now law in 146 countries, representing more than three quarters of the world's population. Under the treaty, governments are required to protect people from secondhand smoke in indoor workplaces and public places. The treaty's governing body is expected to adopt guidelines at its meeting in July that will clarify that governments must implement strong smoke-free laws to meet their treaty obligations.

The U.S. is one of the few countries that has not ratified the FCTC. The U.S. signed the treaty in 2004, indicating its general support, but the President has not taken the next step of forwarding the FCTC to the Senate for consideration. The American Cancer Society is a strong supporter of the FCTC and encourages swift U.S. ratification.

Tobacco use is the world's leading cause of preventable death, claiming the lives of an estimated 4.9 million people each year. This death toll is expected to rise sharply to 10 million deaths a year by 2020, due to the rapid growth in smoking rates in low-income nations. The WHO estimates that more than 650 million people alive today, including 250 million children, will die premature deaths because of tobacco use. In the United States, 440,000 people die each year from tobacco-related illnesses, and nearly one-third of all cancer deaths are attributable to tobacco use.

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy, and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 14 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States. For more information, call 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

Notes to editors:

1. The report: Global Voices for a Smokefree World, including a high resolution map can be downloaded from www.globalsmokefreepartnership.org. The map can be freely reproduced, if attributed to the Global Smokefree Partnership.

2. The Global Smokefree Partnership is a new multipartner initiative formed to promote effective smoke-free air policies worldwide. Partners include Action for the Promotion of Smoke-free Environments (APALTA), Action on Smoking and Health London, American for Nonsmokers Rights, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Cancer Research UK, Coalition for Tobacco Control Pakistan, European Respiratory Society, FCTC Alliance Philippines (FCAP), French National Cancer Institute (INCa), Global Tobacco Research Network, HealthBridge India, HERO-Uganda, International Nongovernmental Coalition Against Tobacco, International Union Against Cancer, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health Institute for Global Tobacco Control, Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance, Pfizer, the World Heart Federation and Action on Smoking and Health. The Partnership is coordinated by the American Cancer Society and the Framework Convention Alliance.

3. For more information on the Global Smokefree Partnership and its Global Voices campaign, visit: www.globalsmokefreepartnership.org.

4. For more information on the FCTC, visitwww.fctc.org.

5. WHO World No Tobacco Day is May 31. This year's theme is Smokefree Environments. For more information on World No Tobacco Day, visit www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/wntd/en/.

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