



MADISON—The Wisconsin State Senate Public Health Committee took an important step today in advancing Senate Bill 150, legislation that would make all public places and workplaces in the state smoke-free. Unfortunately, amendments were added to the bill by the committee that create loopholes for Big Tobacco and delay health protection for restaurant and bar workers for two years. A coalition of public health and business groups urge a vote on the Senate floor as soon as possible to correct and pass SB150.

"This legislation is long overdue; it is time for everyone who lives and works in Wisconsin to have basic health protection from secondhand smoke," said Maureen Busalacchi, Executive Director of SmokeFree Wisconsin. "The bill needs to be corrected through amendments but we are looking forward to finally having action on the Senate floor."

A last-minute amendment was passed that exempts "a place of employment operated by a manufacturer, importer, wholesaler, or distributor of tobacco products" as well as "a tobacco storage facility" from the law (quoted from amendment LRBa0722/1). These broad and undefined exemptions would exempt tobacco company-owned businesses and possibly open up broader loopholes. For example, Reynolds American recently entered the bar and restaurant business by opening an establishment in Chicago. Such an establishment would be clearly exempted under this amendment.

"It is outrageous that tobacco companies still have a say when we write laws to protect health," said Busalacchi.

"The delay in implementation of the law is also a problem," said Alison Prange, Wisconsin Government Relations Director of the American Cancer Society. "Why should people have to wait two full years to breathe free inside a restaurant or bar?"

The measure is now available to be scheduled on the Senate floor where advocates believe a majority of Senators, including members from both parties, will pass the bill. If the bill becomes law, Wisconsin would become the 23rd state to require all restaurants and bars to be smoke-free.

Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including 69 carcinogens. An impressive coalition of health and business advocates have joined together to support SB150, including the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, SmokeFree Wisconsin, Wisconsin Medical Society, Wisconsin Restaurant Association, Wisconsin Innkeepers Association, and others.

For more information visit www.itstimewisconsin.org.