

# Smoke Free News

## *"Little cigars" are no little matter*

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So-called "little cigars" are the tobacco industry's latest attempt to exploit a loophole in state law and avoid taxation. While there are some minor differences in the way they are made, "little cigars" smell and smoke like cigarettes, and come 20 in a pack, but "little cigars" are not taxed the same as cigarettes.

As a result of this loophole, a pack of "little cigars" in Minnesota can cost under \$2.00

per pack. Compare this to an average cost of \$5.50 for a pack of cigarettes.

Cheap tobacco results in higher health care costs and smoking rates, especially among youth. Progress was made during the last session of the legislature. Now is the time to finish the job and pass new legislation to close this loophole. It is estimated that this would bring in between \$1.5 and \$1.8 million a year in lost revenue.



A "little cigar" compared to a cigarette.



**Save the Date!**  
**Day at the Capitol - April 7**

- Rally in the Rotunda
- Meet with your lawmakers



### Raise it for Health Photo Project

Thanks to everyone who submitted photos. We apologize that there was just a short time frame to participate. Many photos were submitted from all over the state. To see more photos from our area visit: [www.4cornerspartnership.org](http://www.4cornerspartnership.org).

## *MN Legislature Back in Session Citizen Advocates Urgently Needed!*

January 4, 2011 saw a lot of new faces at the state capitol, including more than 50 new lawmakers and a new Governor. One thing they all agreed on, there is no easy solution to the state's budget problems. The budget crisis may overshadow other important legislation, including public health issues.

Now more than ever, leaders from the House and Senate said, it is critical for ordinary citizens to get in touch with their legislators and educate them. Sharing your personal stories is the only way legislators have to put a human face on the issues.

Join us at the **Day at the Capitol on April 7**. Be part of the group meeting with your senator and representative. Your voice can make a difference!

The Four Corners Partnership is organizing carpools from Dodge, Goodhue, Rice and Steele counties. Please contact the coordinator for your county for more information (*see p. 4 "How To Contact Us"*).



*Day at the Capitol - April 7 is sponsored by the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society and Raise it for Health.*

## *“If not now, when?” Asks U. S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin*

The Surgeon General of the United States, Regina Benjamin, MD has released the 30<sup>th</sup> Report of the Surgeon General on the effects of smoking on health. This new report, ***How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease***, makes it clear that there is still a great need for action to reduce the harm tobacco causes.

While smoking rates have declined since the first Surgeon General’s Report was released in 1964, today in the United States, tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of death and disease for both men and women. More than 1,000 people are killed every day by cigarettes. One-half of all long term smokers are killed by smoking-related diseases. For every person who dies from tobacco use, another 20 Americans continue to suffer with at least one serious tobacco caused illness.

This new report summarizes research on tobacco addiction and emphasizes that cigarette makers have long known that nicotine addiction helps sell their products. Cigarettes today deliver more nicotine and deliver it quicker than ever before. The result of this is that one-third of the people who have ever tried smoking become daily smokers.

The bulk of the report focuses on how tobacco smoke causes disease. Tobacco smoke is a toxic mix of more than 7,000 chemicals. This new report shows that not only do these chemicals reach the lungs, but they go quickly from the lungs into the blood stream and are carried by the circulatory system throughout the body.

The chemicals in tobacco smoke cause inflammation and damage to the cells that form the lining of the organs in the body. When a person continues to smoke, this damage cannot heal. The result is that the smoker’s immune system works overtime trying to prevent the damage. New

research shows that this constant stress on the immune system can lead to disease in almost any part of the body.

While the full 700+ page report is written in technical language, there is an accompanying consumer booklet that summarizes all of the key points from the report in an easy to read format. This booklet, ***How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease...What It Means To You*** is something every American should read. Download the booklet from: [www.4cornerspartnership.org](http://www.4cornerspartnership.org).



### **Conclusions from the Surgeon General’s Report**

1. **There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Any exposure to tobacco smoke – even an occasional cigarette or exposure to secondhand smoke – is harmful.**
2. **Damage from tobacco smoke is immediate.**
3. **Smoking longer means more damage.**
4. **Cigarettes are designed for addiction.**
5. **There is no safe cigarette.**
6. **The only proven strategy for reducing the risk of tobacco-related disease and death is to never smoke, and if you do smoke to quit.**

### **“If not now, when?” Five Actions Recommended by the Surgeon General to Reduce the Harm Tobacco Causes**

1. **Protect everyone in the country from having to breathe secondhand smoke.**
2. **Make all tobacco products progressively less affordable.**
3. **Expand access to proven cessation treatments and services.**
4. **Take action at the federal, state and local levels to counteract the influence of tobacco advertising, promotions and sponsorship.**
5. **Ensure that all adults and children clearly understand that the result of tobacco use is addiction, suffering, reduced quality of life and all too often, early death.**

# Health Care Costs and Smoking in Minnesota: The Bottom Line

We all pay the price for tobacco. A report issued in November 2010 by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross) shows that each year, smoking is responsible for 5,135 deaths in Minnesota and \$2.87 billion in excess medical costs to treat diseases caused by smoking.

The report, *Health Care Costs and Smoking in Minnesota: The Bottom Line*, was completed by Jeffrey Fellows, Ph.D., and a nationally known health economist from the Center for Health Research at Kaiser Permanente Northwest.

“The human and economic costs are staggering and senseless because tobacco use is completely preventable,” said Marc Manley, M.D., chief prevention officer for Blue Cross. “At a time when budgets are in crisis, from our kitchen tables to the state capitol, we need to renew our focus on preventing disease. Since tobacco remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease, aggressive efforts are needed to keep youth from ever starting to smoke and to make it easier for more people to quit.”

The two tables on this page are adapted from the report. The first table (top right) summarizes the economic cost of smoking. The illustration at center right helps to put this staggering economic cost into perspective.

The second table (bottom right) shows the human cost of smoking in Minnesota using data from 2007. This table also shows that nearly one-third of all deaths in Minnesota in 2007 can be attributed to smoking.


To read the full report visit: [www.4cornerspartnership.org](http://www.4cornerspartnership.org)


## Smoking-attributable Health Care Costs – Minnesota, 2007

Cost Component	Cost
Nursing Home (adult)	\$1,065,000,000
Physician and other professional services (adult)	\$772,000,000
Hospital care (adult)	\$460,000,000
Other personal care (adult)	\$334,000,000
Prescription drugs (adult)	\$234,000,000
Neonatal expenditures (infant)	\$4,000,000
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$2,869,000,000</b>

\$2.87 billion


could also buy:



- 


5 Target Fields

\$2.7 billion

or
- 


10 TCF Bank Stadiums

\$2.9 billion

or
- 


12 I-35W Bridges

\$2.8 billion

or
- 

57,000 4-year Degrees

\$2.9 billion

or
- 

72,000 Jobs at \$40,000

\$2.9 billion

## Total Deaths and Smoking-attributable Deaths – Minnesota, 2007

Disease Category	All Deaths	Smoking-attributable Deaths
Cancer (adult)	4,207	2,447
Respiratory diseases (adult)	2,268	1,383
Heart and vascular disease (adult)	9,840	1,289
Perinatal conditions (infant)	118	14
<b>Total Deaths</b>	<b>16,433</b>	<b>5,135</b>

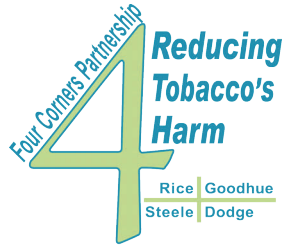
## HOW TO CONTACT US

**Goodhue County:**  
Tom Wolff - (651) 385-6142  
or (800) 950-2142  
e-mail: tom.wolff@co.goodhue.mn.us

**Dodge County:**  
Mary Krebs  
(507) 635-6150  
or (888) 600-5169  
e-mail: mary.krebs@co.dodge.mn.us

**Rice County:**  
Ellen Unruh - (507) 332-6111 Faribault  
(507) 645-9576 x 6111 Northfield  
e-mail: ellen.unruh@gmail.com

**Steele County:**  
Jane Nyquist - (507) 444-7661  
e-mail: jane.nyquist@co.steele.mn.us



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## Minnesota's Annual Report Card: Only One "A"

The American Lung Association released its annual state report cards on January 20, 2011. The full report, **State of Tobacco Control 2010**, gives the details behind the grades. The only bright spot in Minnesota's report card is an "A" for smoke-free air. Our smoke-free law, the Freedom to Breathe Act, is the reason for this high mark. Otherwise, our report card shows that Minnesota could be doing a lot more to reduce the harm caused by tobacco. (See the full Report Card at: [www.4cornerspartnership.org](http://www.4cornerspartnership.org))

American Lung Association 2010 Minnesota Report Card	
Tobacco Prevention and Control Spending	<b>F</b>
Smoke-free Air	<b>A</b>
Cigarette Tax	<b>C</b>
Cessation	<b>D</b>

## "Smoking Room" Bill Threatens Smoke-free Air in Minnesota Restaurants and Bars

In 2007, Minnesota made history by passing the Freedom to Breathe Act and protecting all workers from secondhand smoke. By any standard, this legislation has been a success - 77% of Minnesotans support the law.

It's hard to believe anyone would try rolling back such a popular law, but a bill was introduced in the Minnesota House on January 24, 2011 that would do just that. The bill, HF 188, would permit smoking in the bar area of any establishment that serves alcohol.

Restaurants with attached bars would have to wall off the bar and keep the door between the two areas closed. The bill would also require ventilation systems in bars.

Using ventilation systems to protect the health of workers and customers was proposed during the debate of the Freedom to Breathe Act in 2007. The legislature rejected all of the ventilation proposals. The evidence is clear that

ventilation systems do not protect workers and customers from smoke.

In 2007, the Freedom to Breathe Act passed with strong bipartisan support. This year, the Minnesota Legislature has a bumper crop of new faces in both houses. With so many new lawmakers, many don't know the harms of weakening Freedom to Breathe, nor are they aware of the high level of bipartisan support for the law.

We need to make sure that all of our lawmakers understand that Minnesotans overwhelmingly support smoke-free bars and restaurants.

**Please contact your state legislators and tell them how much you like smoke-free air. Tell them not to change the law!** Then join us for the **Day at the Capitol on April 7** and help us protect clean air! (see page 1 for more information about this event)

Who represents you? Visit:  
[www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/districtfinder.aspx](http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/districtfinder.aspx)