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Mike Quigley Proposes County-Wide Secondhand Smoke Ban

Quigley leads the County Board in health care improvements

CHICAGO—Cook County Commissioner Mike Quigley proposed an ordinance Tuesday that will make it illegal to smoke tobacco within 25 feet of any public establishment in Suburban Cook County and Chicago. Patterned after a similar ordinance currently being considered in Chicago, The Involuntary Smoke Reduction Ordinance will protect the County's residents, especially those who work in a bar or restaurant, from the negative health and economic effects of secondhand smoke.

Surrounded by members of the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago and other leading public health advocates, Quigley explained the importance of eliminating involuntary smoke in public places. Quigley explained how his ordinance will greatly benefit the people who live and work in Cook County by decreasing the county's air pollution; reducing sicknesses caused by secondhand smoke; lowering healthcare costs for employer-sponsored health insurance programs, and reducing the amount that Cook County spends on healthcare for uninsured residents who suffer from a secondhand smoke-related illness.

“If secondhand smoke victims wanted to smoke, they would buy cigarettes,” said Quigley. “Secondhand smoke is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing 65,000 annually. Creating a secondhand smoke-free zone within 25 feet of public places is the only way to protect the residents of Cook County from involuntary exposure to cigarette smoke and from serious illnesses. Eliminating secondhand smoke will reduce steep healthcare costs for both businesses and families. “

Empowered by Home Rule under the Illinois Constitution, Cook County can quickly enact any legislation that promotes public health, including reasonable protections for Cook County residents from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Like the City of Chicago’s Clean Indoor Air Ordinance (2005), The Involuntary Smoke Reduction Ordinance will protect Cook County from the dangers of secondhand smoke by barring smoking in public places such as restaurants, bars, convention facilities, performance arenas, education facilities, arcades, modes of public transportation and their facilities, and retail venues.

The American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago’s CEO, Joel Frick, commended Quigley’s leadership, stating "This ordinance is a logical extension of our work on a smoke-free Chicago ordinance. It will protect thousands hospitality workers who work in Cook County but can hardly afford to get sick. We commend Mike Quigley for his leadership on the Cook County Board."

According to studies, secondhand smoke causes lung cancer, respiratory illnesses, heart disease and stroke in non-smokers, including children. In fact, evidence suggests a direct link between secondhand smoke and an increase in asthma among youth. By enacting Quigley's ordinance, asthma, cancer and heart diseases rates will drop, as demonstrated by other areas that have reduced secondhand smoke.

Reducing secondhand smoke is also good for business. Secondhand smoke-related illnesses reduce productivity and increase health care costs for employer-sponsored health insurance programs. Contrary to tobacco industry claims, there is no empirical evidence that smoking ordinances hurt local economies, and many cities with smoking bans have actually enjoyed an economic lift.

"This is the right thing to do for the people of Cook County. Quigley's ordinance will definitely save lives, and it also will reduce Cook County's health care costs. Restaurants and bars seldom provide health insurance for their workers, and County taxpayers are often stuck with the tab when those uninsured workers get sick," said Joel Frick.

"Eliminating secondhand smoke in public places in Cook County makes sense for our residents, businesses, the environment and the County's economy. Like other ordinances that I have proposed in the past, this is another way to improve our living space and economy without raising taxes. My ordinance will save the County taxpayers money in healthcare costs and effectively work towards balancing the budget," said Quigley.

In addition to his secondhand smoke ordinance, Quigley has issued a series of reports that detail how he would implement top-to-bottom reforms of Cook County government, balancing the county budget without raising taxes. One proposal, "Reinventing Cook County," would save taxpayers as much as \$155 million.