



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 19, 2008

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Michigan Legislature delivers lump of coal – no smokefree air for state residents

CSA frustrated with disregard for public health

Lansing, Mich. – Unable to work on a final compromise for smokefree air in Michigan, the state Legislature wrapped up *Lame Duck* this week and left the legislation to die.

Since both the House and Senate had passed different versions of House Bill 4163, the bill was sent to a conference committee to work out the differences. (The House had passed a version with exemptions in 2007; the Senate passed a version with no exemptions earlier this year). But leadership from each chamber was unable to work together on a final bill, and have left Lansing for the year.

“In the end, political gamesmanship is the only winner here,” said Susan Schechter, spokesperson for CSA and director of advocacy for the American Lung Association of Michigan. “Michigan workers are holding their breathe waiting for this law to pass. The leaders of these chambers know the public wants smokefree air, they have seen the science and economic numbers behind the movement, but instead they are listening to the dollars from Big Tobacco, casino and restaurant industries that flow into their campaign coffers.

“We have worked hard to educate lawmakers on the benefits of going smokefree and despite Michigan residents’ support on this issue, a select few legislators have chose to disregarded the public’s health and kill the bill. It’s an utter shame and a waste of time and money to start over this legislative process again in 2009, but that’s exactly what we have to do.”

Currently, more than half of Americans live in a city or state with smokefree workplace protection laws (34 states have smokefree workplace laws in effect). Gov. Jennifer Granholm has called on legislators to pass statewide smokefree legislation and vowed to sign the bill if it crossed her desk. CSA plans to continue to fight for smokefree air in 2009.

About CSA

The Campaign for Smokefree Air is a grassroots coalition with more than 260 members, including leadership from the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association of Michigan, Michigan Health & Hospital Association, and Michigan State Medical Society, as well as other statewide groups that support making workplaces, including restaurants and bars, smokefree. For more information about the Campaign for Smokefree Air, please visit www.MakeMIAirSmokefree.org.

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