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CONTACT: Emily Gerkin Palsrok
517-316-0210 (office)
517-862-5462 (cell)
epalsrok@baileypr.com

Study shows casino workers exposed to toxic work conditions *Secondhand smoke puts casino employees' health at risk*

LANSING, Mich. – The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recently released a study showing Law Vegas casino workers are exposed to dangerous levels of secondhand smoke every day.

In 2005, at the request of casino employees, NIOSH evaluated secondhand smoke exposure by conducting indoor air quality tests and biomarker assessments of 124 card dealers in Bally's, Caesars Palace and Paris in Las Vegas. Researchers measured exposure and surveyed employees about their work, medical problems and symptoms. Employees reported having respiratory symptoms as well as red or irritated eyes, cough, stuffy nose and shortness of breath.

“Casino workers shouldn't be treated like second-class citizens and this study further proves that air filtration systems in casinos do not protect workers from secondhand smoke,” said Judy Stewart, director of state government relations for the American Cancer Society Great Lakes Division and spokesperson for the Campaign for Smokefree Air. “Michigan casino workers deserve to go to work and not have to worry about what they're breathing in and what it is doing to their health. They have the right to breathe smokefree air and shouldn't have to choose between their health and a paycheck especially in this struggling economy. Lawmakers need to protect their constituents including casino workers and incorporate casinos into smokefree legislation in Michigan.”

High levels of secondhand smoke components were also found in the air, including nicotine, 4-vinyl pyridine, respirable dust, solanesol, benzene, toluene, p-dichloromethane, naphthalene, formaldehyde and acetaldehyde. NIOSH also took urine samples after worker's shifts and found cancer causing toxins contained in secondhand smoke had absorbed into their bodies. After seeing these results, NIOSH recommended creating 100 percent smokefree air in casinos in order to make a healthy work environment for employees.

A poll released in March, conducted by Lansing-based EPIC/MRA, found that sixty-four (64) percent of voters surveyed said that casinos should be included in the law, agreeing that it is only fair that casino employees should have the same protection from secondhand smoke on the job as other workers.

Currently, debate on smokefree air legislation has been limited to the House Regulatory Reform Committee. CSA is pushing for full House action yet this spring.

About CSA

The Campaign for Smokefree Air is a grassroots coalition with more than 270 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 are committed to passing a smokefree workplace law. For more information about the Campaign for Smokefree Air, please visit www.MakeMIAirSmokefree.org.

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