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TOBACCO REPORT CARD SHOWS MIXED GRADES FOR STATE, LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES IN PROTECTING COMMUNITIES AGAINST TOBACCO

The State of Tobacco Control Report provides first-ever grades for all cities and counties in state, urges political leadership to “raise the grade.”

(Los Angeles, CA, January 20, 2011) – The American Lung Association in California released its annual State of Tobacco Control report that issues grades to cities and counties in California on key tobacco control policies, including those for smokefree outdoor environments, smokefree housing, and reducing sales of tobacco products. This year for the first time, the American Lung Association in California graded all 480 incorporated cities and towns, and all 58 counties in the state. To view the complete report, visit www.lungusa.org/california.

Citing mixed results at every level for the state, American Lung Association in California President and CEO Jane Warner said, “It’s time to raise the grade. Strong state and local tobacco control policies must be a top priority for our elected officials.”

In addition to local grades, the *State of Tobacco Control 2010* issues grades for the federal government, all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Once a national leader in tobacco control policies, California now earns mixed results. While California earned an A for smokefree air policies, the state receives an F for failing to adequately fund tobacco prevention and control programs, another F for poor coverage of smoking cessation treatments and services, and a D for its low cigarette tax. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, California now ranks 33rd for its \$.87 per pack tax, far below the national average of \$1.45.

“California’s tobacco tax is too low,” said Warner. “Cigarettes are too cheap and we are failing to adequately protect our children from becoming regular cigarette smokers.”

That is why the American Lung Association in California is co-sponsoring the California Cancer Research Act, a ballot initiative that will raise the state’s cigarette tax by \$1.00 per pack and fund tobacco prevention and control programs and new cancer research. Increasing the tobacco tax will save lives, prevent youth smoking, encourage smokers to quit and lower health care costs from tobacco-related diseases.

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On the local front, several communities are raising their tobacco grades. In particular, Santa Clara County earned an overall grade of F, with two F's and a D for the three grade categories in the 2009 report. In just one year, Santa Clara County adopted strong tobacco control ordinances in all three categories and is now earning an overall grade of A, with A's for all three grade categories.

“Safeguarding our communities from the negative consequences of tobacco is critical,” said Ken Yeager, the Santa Clara County Supervisor who led the County's efforts to pass key tobacco control ordinances in 2010. “These grades represent real health consequences. We went from F to A grades in one year, and I know that other counties can do the same.”

In 2010, a total of 38 municipalities adopted new tobacco policies to protect their citizens and raise their grades. While many jurisdictions adopted strong policies and improved their grades, this year's report shows that the majority of cities and counties in California still fail to protect residents from the harmful effects of tobacco use. In total, 359 cities and counties – 67 percent of jurisdictions in the state – received an F for their overall tobacco grade. To view a full copy of *State of Tobacco Control 2010* and to see all city and county grades, go to www.lungusa.org/california.

In California, tobacco use continues to take a significant toll on public health and taxpayer dollars. Nearly four million people in California smoke, and tobacco-related illness remains the number one preventable cause of death in the state, responsible for more than 36,000 deaths each year – that's more people lost to tobacco than alcohol, HIV/AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined.

About the American Lung Association

Now in its second century, the American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. With your generous support, the American Lung Association is “Fighting for Air” through research, education and advocacy. For more information about the American Lung Association or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872) or visit www.lungusa.org/california.

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