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California Makes the Grade in Annual “State of Tobacco Control” Report

Tobacco Tax Increase, New State Policies Lead to Improved Results in Annual State of Tobacco Control Report, But Much More Work to Be Done

Sacramento, CA (January 25, 2017) – The newly released American Lung Association *State of Tobacco Control 2017* report shows California as one of the most improved states in 2016, earning strong grades on its statewide tobacco policies. The 15th annual report grades states and the federal government on policies to prevent and reduce tobacco use. The report shows California led the way on tobacco policies in the past year, while many other states and the federal government continue to lag behind.

“In 2016, Californians fought back against Big Tobacco’s grip on our state,” said David Pogue, Chair of the American Lung Association in California Governing Board. “Tobacco-related illnesses remain the single most preventable cause of disease and death in California and we’re proud to reaffirm ourselves as a national leader in the effort to reduce smoking rates and exposure to secondhand smoke and to protect our children from a lifetime of addiction.”

California’s grades in the *State of Tobacco Control 2017* report improved thanks to strong policies passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Brown in 2016 including raising the minimum age to purchase tobacco products to 21, regulating e-cigarettes the same as other tobacco products and strengthening workplace smokefree laws. Additionally, voters passed Proposition 56 in November, which raises the tax on a pack of cigarettes by \$2 to \$2.87 per pack beginning in April 2017.

California’s 2017 Grades

- Smokefree Air Policies – Grade A (Up from B in 2016)
- Level of Tobacco Taxes – Grade B (Up from F in 2016)
- Minimum Age of Sale for Tobacco Products to 21 – Grade B
- Funding for State Tobacco Prevention Programs – *Incomplete** (Up from F in 2016)
- Coverage and Access to Services to Quit Tobacco - Grade F

**California received an “incomplete” for funding prevention programs as new revenue from increased tobacco taxes under Proposition 56 is not yet being collected*

In conjunction with the national report, the American Lung Association in California released its companion ***State of Tobacco Control 2017 – California Local Grades*** report, which issues grades for all 482 cities and 58 counties in California on local tobacco control policies. Grades are awarded in three categories: Smokefree Outdoor Air, Smokefree Housing, and Reducing Sales of Tobacco Products. Bonus points are available in the Emerging Issues category. The report can be viewed at www.stateoftobaccocontrol.org/california2017.

For the first time in the history of the report, more than 20 cities and counties received an overall A grade for their tobacco control policies. Additionally, this year’s report saw 12 fewer F grades handed out.

While the number of F grades continues to steadily decline, more than 50% of California’s population still live in communities scoring a D or F. This includes nearly half of the 10 most populous cities in the state. In fact, none of the top 10 most populous cities have an A grade, and none of them passed tobacco control policies in 2016.

“It is unacceptable that some of California’s largest cities continue to lag behind when it comes to preventing teens from smoking and ensuring public spaces can be enjoyed without the threat of secondhand smoke exposure,” said Olivia Diaz-Lapham, President and CEO of the American Lung Association in California. “Strong policies in our major cities, which are home to millions of people, would have significant public health benefits. We call on local officials in California’s largest cities to step up efforts to fight back against tobacco.”

Looking ahead, there are several policy areas where California’s cities and counties can improve.

A lack of comprehensive policies to prevent exposure to secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing complexes continues to cause harm to the most vulnerable: children, the elderly and those with lung illnesses. Residents



of apartment buildings who suffer from asthma, COPD or lung cancer are routinely exposed to secondhand smoke from tobacco use in neighboring units or common outdoor areas.

The American Lung Association in California strongly advocates for all multi-unit housing complexes to be smokefree and will continue to work with local governments and the State Legislature to implement those policies.

The sale of menthol and flavored tobacco products, which the tobacco industry utilizes to target youth and those in disadvantaged communities, must be further curtailed. In 2016, Santa Clara County led the way on the issue, becoming the first municipality in the nation to restrict the sale of menthol and other flavored tobacco products to 21-and-over retailers.

“Big Tobacco uses flavored tobacco products to get teens and those in disadvantaged communities lured into a deadly addiction,” said David Tom Cooke, MD, FCCP, FACS, lung surgeon and member of the American Lung Association in California Governing Board. “Tobacco-related illnesses are completely preventable and we must act at the local level to end this health crisis.”

For media interested in speaking with an expert about the [State of Tobacco Control](#) or the [State of Tobacco Control 2017 – California Local Grades](#) report, lung health, tobacco use and tobacco control policies, contact the American Lung Association in California at ryan.endean@lung.org or (916) 585-7666.

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About the American Lung Association in California

The American Lung Association in California is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through research, education and advocacy. The Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer, to improve the air we breathe, to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families, and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases. For more information about the American Lung Association in California or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-685-4872) or visit www.lung.org/california