

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Date: 01/30/19 12:01 a.m. ET

CONTACT: Bo Smith | American Lung Association in California

P: 310-359-6386 E: Bo.Smith@Lung.org

## California Earns Top Grades in Annual State of Tobacco Control Report

*Important Tobacco Tax measure and improvements in municipal policies lead the way, but flavored tobacco epidemic must be addressed immediately.*

SACRAMENTO, CA (January 30, 2019) – The latest American Lung Association *State of Tobacco Control 2019* report reveals that California again leads the nation in efforts to reduce and prevent tobacco use, though much work remains to be done. The study reminds us that tobacco use remains the nation’s leading cause of preventable death and disease, taking an estimated 480,000 lives every year.

While California received solid grades in many areas, a disturbing trend is threatening the health of the state’s young people as youth e-cigarette use reaching epidemic levels due to a 78 percent increase in high school e-cigarette use from 2017 to 2018, according to results from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey. This equals one million additional kids beginning to use e-cigarettes, placing their developing bodies and lungs at risk from the chemicals in e-cigarettes as well as a lifetime of addiction to a deadly product. This has caused the U.S. Surgeon General to declare e-cigarette use among young people an epidemic in [an Advisory](#) issued in December 2018.

“We are proud that California continues to make progress in addressing the lung health of its people, said Lindsey Freitas, Senior Director of Advocacy for the American Lung Association in California. “By passing a strong tobacco tax in 2016, continuing to support coverage of smoking cessation programs and other key quit tools and standing up to the billions spent in lobbying by Big Tobacco, the state remains a leading nationwide advocate for healthy lungs and clean air.”

The 17<sup>th</sup> annual “State of Tobacco Control” report grades states and the federal government on policies proven to prevent and reduce tobacco use. It finds that California is among the top states in the nation in several key areas, though key to maintaining and further improvement hinge on the continued efforts of state, county and local officials to continue to enact strict measures to prevent youth smoking, e-cigarette use and multi-unit housing protections.

### California’s 2019 Grades

- Smokefree Air Policies - Grade A
- Funding for State Tobacco Prevention Programs – Grade B
- Level of State Tobacco Taxes - Grade B
- Coverage and Access to Services to Quit Tobacco - Grade B
- Minimum Age of Sale for Tobacco Products to 21 – Grade B

In conjunction with the national report, the American Lung Association in California released its companion [State of Tobacco Control 2019 – California Local Grades](#) report, which issues grades for all 482 cities and 58 counties in California on local tobacco control policies.

Highlights from this year’s report include:

- Eight communities improved their overall grade to an A from last year.
- California now has a total of 39 communities with an overall A grade
- Over half of the policies passed in 2018 included updated definitions of secondhand smoke and/or tobacco products to include emerging products such as electronic cigarettes.

While the number of F grades continues to steadily decline, half of California's population still live in communities scoring a D or F. Just 6% live in cities or counties with an A grade. And the tobacco industry has undertaken an unprecedented proactive strategy to push back against local efforts. Last year, RJ Reynolds spent close to \$12 million to unsuccessfully challenge a local ordinance in San Francisco that sought to ensure youth didn't start smoking.

"Once again, California earned some of the best grades in the country, however the fact remains that more than 9,000 children begin smoking each year in the state while more than 40,000 residents die from smoking related causes," said Vanessa Marvin, American Lung Association Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy.

To further improve the health and safety of all Californians, continued aggressive policies must be taken at the state and local levels, including the passage of CA SB 38, to ban flavored e-cigarettes and all other flavored tobacco products that are created specifically to appeal to youth. Such measures would take aim directly at the scourge of youth smoking and the projected more than 400,000 youth in California alive today whose lives will ultimately be prematurely lost to smoking related diseases.

For media interested in speaking with an expert about the [State of Tobacco Control](#) or the [State of Tobacco Control 2019 – California Local Grades](#) report, lung health, tobacco use and tobacco control policies, contact the American Lung Association in California at [Bo.Smith@Lung.org](mailto:Bo.Smith@Lung.org) or 310-359-6386.

# # #