



**SOLANO
COUNTY**



HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES, PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2023

News Contact:

Matthew Davis, Sr. Management Analyst and Public Communications Officer
(707) 784-6111 | MATDavis@SolanoCounty.com **(AND)**

Tracy Nachand, Supervising Health Education Specialist
(707) 784-8638 | tnachand@solanocounty.com **(AND)**

Robin Cox, Sr. Health Services Manager
(707) 784-8611 | Rccox@solanocounty.com

Solano County improves in tobacco policies; more needs to be done

When it comes to local laws preventing exposure to second-hand smoke of tobacco products, Solano County and its cities has made some improvements over the past year according to the American Lung Association's (ALA) annual report card, however, there is still more work that needs to be done.

"Protecting residents from others' secondhand smoke is important and was made even more important during the pandemic when families were staying at home more," said Robin Cox, Bureau Chief for Solano Public Health's Health Promotion and Community Wellness Bureau (VibeSolano). "Given the overall lack of affordable housing in the San Francisco Bay Area, many people do not have options to 'just move' away from a neighbor's smoke that enters their apartment through windows, doors, balconies, shared heating/air conditioning, vents and electrical systems," said Cox.

The ALA report card gives an overall tobacco control letter grade awarded to the municipality based on having ordinances in three categories: smoke-free outdoor air, smoke-free housing, and reducing sales of tobacco products. Bonus points are available for ordinance language for emerging tobacco issues. The report card process determines grades by assigning points to various tobacco prevention laws that are in place within each jurisdiction.

Among local cities, Benicia received the highest overall grade with an A based on two very comprehensive tobacco control laws it passed. Benicia is followed by Vallejo with a C grade. Vallejo improved its overall grade from an F to a C by passing policies that protect people from second-hand smoke in their multi-unit apartment and condominium housing. However, Solano County as a whole, and all but two of its cities, received failing grades.

Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, and Vacaville received overall failing grades, according to the association's annual "State of Tobacco Control 2023" report. Solano County unincorporated area received a D in smoke-free air due to an ordinance passed by the Solano County Board of Supervisors regarding smoke free county campuses including three county-owned and operated parks.

The ALA annual report tracks progress in how elected officials and various government entities are implementing key tobacco control policies, such as tobacco retailer licensing, smoke-free apartments, condominiums, common areas, smoke-free outdoor dining and services areas. Restricting flavored

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tobacco products, which the science shows hooks youth and adults due to buffering the harshness of inhalation, is measured as a critical element of the report card as well.

"California has proven that local tobacco control policies save lives," said Tracy Nachand, Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP) Project Director. "Tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure continue to cause people to die prematurely and are completely preventable. Local policy makers can take steps to protect Solano residents through adopting protections such as those measured in the ALA Report Card; these are essential to improving the public's health and quality of life," said Nachand.

TPEP is currently conducting public opinion polls in multiple cities in Solano County to assess which cities may be ready to consider either a smoke-free multi-unit housing ordinance or a comprehensive smoke-free public places ordinance. In addition, TPEP is working with partnering agencies, including LGBTQ Minus Tobacco and Bay Area Community Resources, as well as residents on a townhall to discuss a Tobacco Retail License in Vallejo.

Within the ALA Report Card's category on restrictions on flavored tobacco products in 2022, California continued its progress and nationwide leadership on tobacco control. In November, voters approved Proposition 31, which allows California's flavored tobacco law to go into effect and prohibits the sale of flavored tobacco products with an exemption for hookah and loose tobacco.

"Last year, we were pleased to see the residents of California vote to end the sale of flavored tobacco, including menthol, which will help decrease health inequities among our people of color and will help impact the youth e-cigarette epidemic in the state. As a result, California's 'State of Tobacco Control' grade for policies to end the sale of flavored tobacco products improved to a 'B' grade this year," said Michael Seilback, national assistant vice president of state public policy at the American Lung Association.

This year's report noted the need for California policymakers to focus on continuing to pass restrictions on the sale of flavored tobacco products on the local level and enacting stronger tobacco control laws throughout the state.

"Despite the significant progress in California, the tobacco industry continues to try to find loopholes to sell their addictive products in kid-friendly flavors," said Seilback. "This year, we are looking to local communities and the state to push forward innovative policies to eliminate tobacco use in California once and for all."

For further information on the "State of Tobacco Control 2023" report visit the ALA website at <https://www.lung.org/research/sotc>.

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VibeSolano is the branding for the Health Promotion & Community Wellness Bureau of the Solano Public Health Division, Health and Social Services Department.