

Veterans and Smoke-free Laws



The Grand Haven American Legion in Ottawa County, Michigan was required by a county ordinance to go smoke-free. Despite initial opposition, members quickly began to appreciate the decision. According to the bartender, neither business nor membership was hurt by the law. *The American Legion said that even if the law were repealed, the club would most likely remain smoke-free.*¹

Veterans Deserve Protection from Secondhand Smoke

- Only 19.7% of veterans are current smokers.²
- Veterans are at risk for serious illnesses that are caused or worsened by exposure to secondhand smoke like lung cancer, emphysema and other health complications.³
- There are over 7,000 harmful chemicals in secondhand smoke and nearly 70 cause cancer.⁴
- Each year, at least 3,000 lung cancer deaths occur among adult nonsmokers in the U.S. due to exposure to secondhand smoke.⁴
- Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke increase their risk of heart disease by 25-30%.⁵

Veterans Deserve to Breathe Smoke-free Air

- Everyone, including veterans, deserves the freedom to breathe safe, healthy air.
 - Veterans living in rural areas are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke than those living in urban or suburban areas.⁶
- Despite the fact that few veterans smoke, cessation rates among veterans are lower than the general public.⁷
- Smoke-free policies help veterans quit by providing a more supportive environment in which to stop smoking.

1. Doty A. State smoking ban: No citations from Ottawa County so far. *Grand Haven Tribune*. October 20, 2010.
2. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. *2008 Survey of veterans enrollees' health and reliance upon the VA* September 2009.
3. McLaughlin JK, Hrubec Z, Blot WJ, Fraumeni JF, Jr. Smoking and cancer mortality among U.S. veterans: a 26-year follow-up. *Int J Cancer*. Jan 17 1995;60(2):190-193.
4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health;2010.
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease and Prevention and Promotion, Office of Smoking and Health;2006.
6. Vander Weg M, Cunningham C. *Veterans' environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) exposure*: Department of Veterans Affairs; Winter 2011.
7. Jonk YC, Sherman SE, Fu SS, Hamlett-Berry KW, Geraci MC, Joseph AM. National trends in the provision of smoking cessation aids within the Veterans Health Administration. *Am J Manag Care*. Feb 2005;11(2):77-85.

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