

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **DOCTORS APPLAUD NEW LAW, VOW TO HELP PATIENTS QUIT SMOKING**

**MINNEAPOLIS** – As October 1<sup>st</sup>, the day when the Freedom to Breathe Act takes effect, approaches, the Minnesota Medical Association (MMA) congratulates Minnesota lawmakers and Governor Pawlenty for their leadership in protecting Minnesotans' health. The new law prohibits smoking in bars, restaurants, private clubs and other workplaces.

“This historic public health legislation will save lives and improve health,” said James J. Dehen Jr., M.D., president of the MMA. “In the long run, it will also reduce health care costs.”

Secondhand smoke kills more than 580 Minnesotans each year, and sickens more than 66,000, according to a study released this year by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, in partnership with the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. The study also found that secondhand smoke costs more that \$215 million in annual health care costs in Minnesota alone. In June 2006, the Surgeon General stated conclusively that secondhand smoke causes death and disease in nonsmokers.

“This new law may be just the push some people need to stop smoking for good,” Dehen said. “We know it’s not easy to break the addiction to tobacco. Minnesota physicians

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stand ready to help their patients connect with the many resources that are available to help them quit smoking. ”

Every Minnesotan, whether insured or uninsured has access to counseling and support.

QUITPLAN Services offers free in-person, online or telephone counseling as well as nicotine patches, gum and lozenges for the uninsured at 1-800-354-PLAN or [www.quitplan.com](http://www.quitplan.com).

The Minnesota Clinic Fax Referral allows doctors to direct their insured patients to the right counseling program.

“We can be proud of a law that gives all Minnesotans the right to breathe clean air in their workplace,” Dehen said.

In 1975, Minnesota was the first state to pass clean indoor air legislation, which protected many citizens but did not include protections for the hospitality industry. Now after 32 years, the Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007 extends workplace protections from secondhand smoke to hospitality workers. As of October 1, 2007, all Minnesota workers are protected from secondhand smoke, including bar and restaurant workers.