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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 30, 2003**

**SPANO AND LEGISLATORS REMINDS PUBLIC THAT WESTCHESTER'S TOUGH  
WORK PLACE ANTI-SMOKING LAW TAKES EFFECT WEDNESDAY**

Starting Wednesday, June 4, it will be illegal to smoke in almost all work places in Westchester.

That's when Westchester's tough "Smoke-Free Work Place Law" goes into effect. The bill, signed by County Executive Andy Spano in March, bans smoking in almost all places of work as a way to protect employees and the public from second-hand smoke.

"This is one of the most important pieces of public health legislation enacted in recent years," said Spano. "The dangerous effects of second-hand smoke are well documented. I have no doubt that this law will save lives and prevent serious illnesses."

The measure was approved by the Board of Legislators in March, which had taken a proposal from Spano and toughened it further. Legislators lauded the law as an important accomplishment in efforts to protect the health and safety of the public.

Lois Bronz, chair of the Board of Legislators, who lost five sisters and four other family members to cigarette-related cancer, said, "I know first hand the tragic consequences of smoking, and I want to spare others that terrible knowledge. This is an important step."

County Legislator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, chair of the Board's Legislation Committee, added, "There probably is no one who does not have a friend or family member who has become ill as a result of smoking or second-hand smoke. I hope this new law will begin to change things."

Said Legislator George Latimer, "The mission of this legislation is simply to save lives. Second-hand smoke is annoying to many, but beyond that it can cause health problems to nonsmokers. We want to reduce its presence in our work environment."

Commented Legislator Michael Kaplowitz, chairman of the Environment and Health Committee, "I would like to thank the County Executive, the American Cancer Society and all my colleagues on the Board who supported this

key legislation. Westchester has demonstrated strong leadership skills by once again being in the forefront of a key initiative. This law provides our residents with a dual benefit by protecting both workers and consumers.”

Legislator Thomas Abinanti, who has long pushed for tough restrictions on smoking, commented, “As a result of our new law, employees will no longer have to choose between good health and a good job.”

Westchester has had a law on the books since the mid 1980s that regulates smoking in many indoor public places, but the new law goes further by banning it in most work places all together, including restaurants and bars. Also, while the law primarily deals with *indoor* workplace locations, there are some provisions that deal with *outdoor* locations at restaurants and bars

The anti-smoking law will be enforced by the Westchester County Board of Health, the county Department of Public Safety and other municipal police departments. Violators – either businesses that do not comply or individuals who smoke in the work place – will be charged with an infraction, a civil offense. Fines can be as high as \$1,000.

The law puts Westchester in with a growing number of places in the metropolitan area – New York City and Nassau, among others – that have enacted tough anti-smoking laws for the workplace. A similar state-wide law goes into effect July 24.

Spano noted that Gov. Pataki and some members of the state Legislature have indicated they are open to amending the state law to ease some restrictions. “I hope the Governor and the Legislature will reject any watering down of the state law. But either way, Westchester’s law will remain strong. And in those cases where the county and state law are not identical, the more stringent provisions apply,” Spano said.

Here are the main provisions of the county and state law and applicable dates:

- **Effective June 4**, the county law bans smoking in all worksites (including restaurants, taverns and bars) with at least one employee. In this regard, the state law is more stringent and bans smoking even in worksites with no employees. This means that **starting July 24**, when the state law takes effect, smoking will be banned even in sites with no employees.
- **Effective June 4**, smoking is prohibited in any outdoor areas of restaurants or bars where at least one employee must work. This includes tables, chairs or other outside areas where employees routinely bus, take orders or deliver food or beverages.
- **Effective June 4**, smoking is prohibited at all outdoor areas of workplaces (including bars and restaurants) with at least one employee where there is an overhead structure such as a roof, overhang or canopy that may partially contain smoke. Smoking *can be permitted* in outside areas that are not otherwise enclosed (without roof, overhang or canopy) and not frequented by employees in the course of their work.

- **Effective June 4**, smoking is prohibited in all restaurant, bar or company-owned vehicles if the business employs at least one employee.
- **Effective June 4**, businesses must prominently post SMOKING IS PROHIBITED, or NO SMOKING signs, using the international NO SMOKING symbol – consisting of a pictorial representation of a burning cigarette enclosed in a red circle with a red bar across it. All signs must be protected from tampering, damage, removal or concealment.

The full text of both laws is posted on the health department's website - [www.co.westchester.ny.us/health](http://www.co.westchester.ny.us/health).

The laws make the following exceptions to the no smoking rules:

- tobacco shops where smoking is permitted
- hotels and motels, which may designate a certain number of contiguous rooms for smoking. (But smoking is banned in lobbies, hallways, meeting rooms and other common areas.)
- Owners and operators of residential health care facilities may designate a smoking area within the facility, consistent with the provisions of state law. This area must be conspicuously marked.

The indoor work place law is one of many anti-smoking initiatives of Spano and the Board of Legislators to fight underage smoking and protect the health and safety of all residents from second-hand smoke. These include the following:

- The “Butt-out” anti-smoking program, aimed at deterring underage smoking and helping smokers of any age quit. This included a series of commercials aimed at teens and pre-teens, as well as the highly visible “Face Value” campaign designed to prevent smoking among teenage girls.
- In 2001, Spano signed a law that restricts the access of minors to tobacco products, by banning the self-service sale of tobacco products and barring the placement of ads for tobacco products within 10 feet of any fixture on which candy, toys or trading cards are displayed.
- In 2002, smoking was banned in 21 county parks.
- The county has aggressively enforced laws banning the sale of cigarettes to minors.