



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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GOVERNOR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 17, 2014

HAWAII HEALTH ADVOCATES MARK 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT ON SMOKING AND HEALTH

HONOLULU -- As the United States marks the 50th anniversary of the first Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health, Hawaii tobacco control advocates are applauding the enormous progress achieved in reducing smoking. However, they are also calling on state leaders to take strong action to continue the fight against what is still the nation's number one cause of preventable death.

The first Surgeon General's report, issued on Jan. 11, 1964, alerted Americans to the deadly consequences of smoking. This was a historic turning point in the nation's fight against tobacco.

"In the past 50 years, the U.S. has made remarkable progress, cutting smoking rates by more than half, thereby protecting much of the population from harmful secondhand smoke and saving millions of lives," said Lola Irvin, Tobacco Settlement Program manager. "Hawaii can take pride in the progress our state has made in tobacco control since the first SGR was issued. Hawaii's youth smoking rates are the second lowest, and adult rates the third lowest in the nation. Over the last ten years, smoking rates for youth went down about 60 percent and for adults almost 40 percent."

But the battle against tobacco is far from over. Tobacco use still kills more than 440,000 Americans every year, sickens millions more and costs the nation \$193 billion a year in health care bills and lost productivity.

Acting Health Director Gary Gill commented: "In Hawaii, an estimated 1,100 adults die annually from smoking, costing \$336 million in related medical expenses. The Department of Health will continue its work with partners in Hawaii to prevent initiation of tobacco use by youth and young adults; promote quitting; eliminate involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke; and reduce tobacco-related disparities among population groups. Hawaii is one of only a handful of states that continues to use the master settlement agreement payments on tobacco prevention and control efforts."

Gov. Neil Abercrombie noted the challenge of addressing the increasing use of new, unregulated products, such as electronic smoking devices or e-cigarettes: "Hawaii must remain vigilant about smoking behavior, especially as it influences our youth because we don't want it

to be an entryway into more dangerous smoking or drug use. On the 50th anniversary of the first Surgeon General's report, it is time for our nation and Hawaii to end the smoking epidemic. We know how to do so, and we cannot afford to wait another 50 years.”

To learn more about the Surgeon General's Report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress*, go to www.SurgeonGeneral.gov.

Important Hawaii Milestones in Tobacco Prevention and Control

The following are highlights of important milestones that contributed to Hawaii's successful reduction in tobacco use. The efforts were achieved by partners across legislative, governmental, public and business sector organizations, and concerned community members who worked to introduce and pass state and county policies on tobacco sales and use, and providing resources for communities to help people quit.

- **1965:** the state tax on tobacco products was amended to 40% of the wholesale price
- **1976:** Smoking in Public Places legislation (Act 108) passed by the state legislature prohibiting smoking and requiring signage for designated areas (e.g. elevators, auditoriums, meeting rooms, community centers)
- **1978:** The Hawaii Department of Health developed states' first governmental agency policy on smoking
- **1988:** Sale of Tobacco Products to Minors legislation (Act 293) passed raising legal age from 15 to 18 years
- **1991:** Hawaii Department of Education policy bans smoking in all departmental classrooms, facilities and activities. Act 253 passed by state legislature restricting placement of cigarette vending machines
- **1997:** City and County of Honolulu prohibits smoking in all enclosed workplaces (except bars, restaurants, and nightclubs)
- **1998:** Hawaii State Attorney General entered into master settlement agreement with 5 of the largest tobacco companies and 45 other states
- **1999:** Hawaii establishes Tobacco Settlement Special Fund and Tobacco Prevention and Control Trust Fund. . Hawaii cigarette tax increased to \$1/pack
- **2005:** Hawaii Tobacco Quitline started
- **2006:** Hawaii became 14th state to enact a Smoke-free Workplace and Public Places Law (Act 395) prohibiting smoking in all workplaces, including restaurants, bars, and nightclubs
- **2008:** the Big Island passed an ordinance banning smoking in all county beaches, parks, and recreation areas, followed in 2010 with legislation prohibiting smoking in motor vehicles when a minor is present
- **2011:** Hawaii cigarette tax raised to \$3.20/pack
- **2013:** Hawaii legislature passes law banning sales of electronic smoking devices to minors under 18 and requiring warning signage (Act 295). The Big Island increases the legal age to by tobacco products to 21
- **2014:** Honolulu County enacts ordinance banning smoking at all beaches, parks, and bus stops on Oahu