

## **HOSPITALITY & HEALTH: BUILDING BRIDGES**

The best scenario for enacting smoke-free workplace legislation is when restaurants, the health community, and government agencies work together to develop a policy which they can collectively implement.

The process of passing smoke-free restaurant and bar laws has often pit restaurateurs against government regulators and health organizations. Then, after the law is passed, barriers of mistrust and misunderstanding must be broken down in order to make the implementation phase go as smooth as possible.

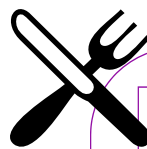
This section will help you better understand how everyone can work together to implement a new smoke-free law.

### **Time to Move On:**

One common obstacle to the successful implementation of smoke-free workplace laws is the attempt by those few outspoken members of the hospitality and tobacco industries who file lawsuits in an attempt to try to overturn the new regulation before it is enacted. Or, immediately after enactment, they try to garner votes to have the law rescinded, under charges that the law just isn't working.

The chances of these tactics succeeding regardless of perceived merit, however, are miniscule – historically, less than one in ten. What does happen, is that those restaurant and bar owners who pursue a path of opposition not only typically fail to overturn the new law, but due to their rebellion, end up finding it more difficult to implement the law themselves. When owners rebel, their employees and customers take note. In the long run this only makes their transition more stressful, drawn out, and costly.

Thus, overcoming divisiveness and uniting the industry with government and health to implement the new law both relieves unproductive stress and makes the best bottom-line business sense.



*Rebelling against the new law only makes the transition more stressful, drawn out, and costly.*

## **Outreach:**

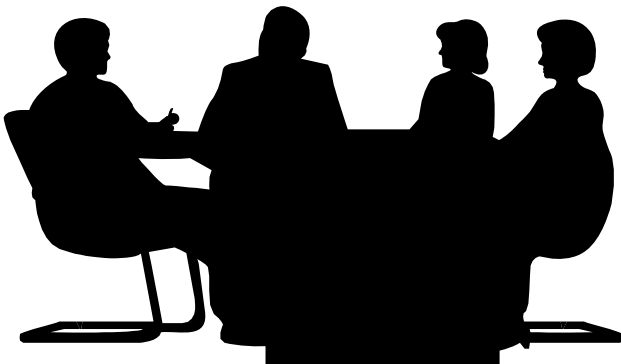
There are several ways to build community coalitions that unite hospitality, government and health interests to the common goal of successful smoke-free workplace implementation. While these vary by community or state, they are often initiated by the health or government groups that typically proposed the law in the first place.

If this isn't happening, anyone in the hospitality, health or government interests involved should take the initiative to call the others and suggest a meeting be held to develop ways to ensure a smooth, evenhanded transition into the new law. This should include at least one face-to-face meeting to help build familiarity and earn trust.

## **What Restaurateurs Can Do:**

Because restaurants, especially those with banquet rooms, provide an excellent venue for meetings, restaurateurs can help bridge the gap by offering to host an implementation meeting at their establishment. It will not only draw more attendees than a regular office setting, but also provide restaurateurs with an opportunity to visually point out any challenges in complying with the new law.

Anyone on the enforcement end of the new law, such as health inspectors or police officers should be at the top of the invitation list. It is better to work out potential problems in this congenial setting rather than have to debate them in the middle of a customer's dining experience.



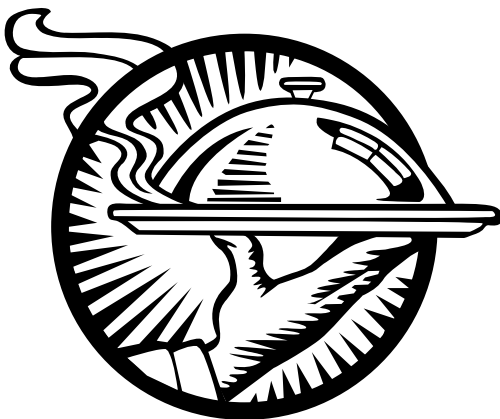


*Government and health can  
work with the media to  
publicize the new law.*

### **What Government & Health Organizations Can Do:**

Typically, with the enactment of a new law, restaurateurs don't have the resources to develop their own implementation materials. So to assist the hospitality industry, government and health groups can offer their resources and cooperate to produce, print, and distribute these materials.

Furthermore, government and health can work through the media to publicize stories that reach out to those affected parties who cannot attend coalition meetings. This might include news stories (coverage of the first coalition meeting itself might be a good one) or advertisements in restaurant trade publications and public media. The message of these ads should cover how to comply with the new law and express thanks to everyone for working together to make implementation as hassle free as possible.



## **Surprising Cooperation:**

There are still many people who refuse to admit that secondhand smoke kills. Yet, the majority of people universally acknowledge its threat, and even the tobacco companies now admit it is a hazard.

Not only do most customers accept that something has to be done to protect people from the dangers of secondhand smoke, but the vast majority of citizens will obey a law, whether they personally agree with it or not.

This is an issue on the fast track. Early in this decade, passage of smoke-free workplace laws accelerated at a tremendous pace. In many parts of the nation, smoke-free restaurants, airplanes, movie theaters, and other workplaces have been the norm for years.

As Ruben Villavicencio of *The Whole Enchilada* in Placentia, California said, “Business changes, so you have to adapt to those changes.”

The switch to smoke-free dining will not be as difficult as you think. You will find less resistance from your customers than you expect and they will appreciate your efforts to obey the new law, as any discord between business owners and enforcement officers puts customers in an awkward and uncomfortable position – and comfort is what keeps customers coming back.



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adapt to those changes.”*

*Ruben Villavicencio,  
The Whole Enchilada*