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Letter to the editor: Let's go smoke-free

by: Sheppard F. Miers Jr., Tulsa
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The nation's front-line defender against disease has told us how Oklahoma could save thousands of lives and millions of dollars, but our state Legislature has not taken the logical step needed to achieve it.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports nonsmoker exposure to second-hand smoke kills nearly 50,000 Americans annually. CDC research also shows overall costs to Oklahoma exceeding $2 billion annually from preventable smoking-related deaths, disease, lost productivity and medical expense. And CDC and National Cancer Institute researchers say compromises of the kind Oklahoma has made on second-hand smoke (separate, limited areas in restaurants, bars) do not work. Disease, death and health care cost burdens come with smoking wherever it occurs.

Some businesses argue they must have smoking, along with second-hand smoke, to prosper or serve their customers. The cost for allowing it is preventable loss of life and health of Oklahomans, and millions of dollars of medical expenses those businesses will never pay. Oklahoma can become a national leader in promoting health and productivity if all public places in the state are made smoke-free.

Write your legislators. Tell them to make that intelligent decision, with no smoke and mirrors exceptions.

Editor's note: Miers is director of the Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer Research in Tulsa.

Letters to the editor are encouraged. Each letter must be signed and include an address and a telephone number where the writer can be reached during business hours. Addresses and phone numbers will not be published. Letters should be a maximum of 250 words to be considered for publication and may be edited for length, style and grammar. Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, Tulsa World, Box 1770, Tulsa, Okla., 74102, or send e-mail to letters@tulsaworld.com.

 Associate Images:

A trash can is filled with cigarette butts and packages. Stephen Pingry/Tulsa World file

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