

New Orleans Builds Coalition of Non-Traditional Stakeholders to Pass Comprehensive Smoke-Free Ordinance

In January 2015, the city of New Orleans passed a comprehensive smoke-free ordinance protecting public spaces such as restaurants, bars, and casinos from secondhand smoke and secondhand e-cigarette vapor exposure. Public health advocates relied heavily upon a coalition of non-traditional partners, including New Orleans jazz musicians, bar owners, and casino employees, to build a consensus among New Orleans residents and legislators that a smoke-free policy would be a positive change for residents, business owners, and visitors alike.

New Orleans is home to casinos, restaurants, and over 500 bars, establishments that sometimes fight against smoke-free legislation for fear of adverse economic impacts. However, as New Orleans and its healthcare system recovered from the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, public health stakeholders saw an opportunity to reimagine New Orleans as a better, healthier city for residents and visitors alike. The Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living (TFL), a statewide program funded by tobacco taxes, and other public health organizations started working in 2007 to build a coalition of traditional public health and non-traditional stakeholders in favor of a smoke-free New Orleans. Eventually, these efforts culminated in the passage of the Smoke Free Air Act in January 2015.

Steps Taken:

- Starting in 2007, TFL and other stakeholders (including the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and the American Lung Association) began community outreach in New Orleans' African-American neighborhoods, where the health infrastructure was struggling to rejuvenate after Hurricane Katrina. Community members, local clinics, and other parts of the health system started supporting the overall vision to build a healthier New Orleans through smoke-free air and other initiatives.
- Starting in 2010, public health groups worked with bar owners to hold smoke-free bar nights, happy hours, and other small events to add bar owners and musicians to New Orleans' smoke-free coalition. Efforts were made to reach out to the hospitality industry because it's a key economic sector in New Orleans.
- To support the case for smoke-free air, stakeholders performed air quality monitoring tests in bars and casinos to quantify secondhand smoke exposure. Surveys were conducted at outdoor music festivals and other events to see if tourists would continue to come to New Orleans if they couldn't smoke in bars and other indoor spaces. The results were overwhelmingly positive.

- The New Orleans City Council passed the Smoke Free Air Act in 2015, which restricts smoking (including e-cigarette use) inside buildings and within 25 feet of entrances.
- As a result of the law, 5,000 workers in the hospitality industry and millions of New Orleans residents and visitors can enjoy a smoke-free space.
- Bar and casino revenues ultimately increased after the law took effect.

State Success Story



- After the legislation was passed and signed into law in January 2015, TFL and other public health partners implemented an aggressive outreach campaign to ensure that the law would be well enforced as soon as it took effect in April 2015. These partners designed and distributed toolkits for different kinds of businesses (e.g., bars, restaurants, hotels, and casinos). In addition, outreach efforts were employed in the media and at music festivals, and smoke-free air bar napkins were printed and given to local bars.

Results:

- Over 100 local musicians publicly supported the proposed smoke-free law, representing a public-facing element of the smoke-free New Orleans campaign. Deacon John, Paul Sanchez, Craig Klein, and other musicians appeared on billboards, spoke before city council, and helped reach out to other non-traditional partners. Their desire to perform in smoke-free music venues, and their testimonials about friends in the music industry whose health had been negatively impacted by secondhand smoke, were compelling parts of the overall tobacco control effort.
- In January 2015, the New Orleans City Council unanimously passed the [Smoke Free Air Act](#), which New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu subsequently signed. This comprehensive bill restricts tobacco smoking (including e-cigarettes) in indoor buildings (including bars, restaurants, and casinos), within 25 feet of building entrances, and in most outdoor recreation areas. Enforcement began on April 22, 2015. New Orleans councilwoman LaToya Cantrell sponsored the bill.
- Bar revenue in New Orleans increased after the law went into effect. Following an initial decrease in revenue, casino revenue increased sharply after enforcement began.
- Efforts to publicize and advocate for the proposed law led to approximately 900 earned stories on television and in print, with a total earned media value of about \$2.75 million.

Lessons Learned:

- Non-traditional stakeholders outside of public health can have a tremendous effect on health policy efforts. In New Orleans, a city known for its live music and social gatherings, musicians and bar owners were key partners in communicating smoke-free messaging to the general public and to city councilmembers.
- Crafting talking points for opposition and misinformation is important to successfully passing public health legislation. The pro-vaping community was very vocal in New Orleans and starting in 2013, public health advocates had to educate New Orleans councilmembers about the science regarding the dangers of e-cigarettes. Bar and casino owners feared they would lose money should the legislation pass, and public health stakeholders had to assure these groups that New Orleans' hospitality industry would remain a strong economic sector.
- Policy victories often take substantial time and effort. New Orleans' smoke-free law went into effect on April 22, 2015, approximately eight years after community organizing efforts began. Significant time and resources are needed to organize community and business support, build an effective public support campaign, pass legislation, and subsequently educate the public and businesses about the law before it takes effect.

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<http://www.lphi.org/home2/section/3-27/the-louisiana-campaign-for-tobacco-free-living>

Those interested in learning more about New Orleans's smoke-free ordinance should also see the official [New Orleans webpage](#), [Truth Initiative's Warner Series discussion](#), and the [smoking cessation webpage](#) for the New Orleans Musicians' Clinic & Assistance Foundation.