Oregon receives failing grade on tobacco prevention funding

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Local Association Urges 2007 Legislature to Make Tobacco Control a Public Health Priority after Oregon fails for the 5th year in a rowFor the fifth year in a row, Oregon received a failing grade in tobacco prevention funding, according to the annual American Lung Association State of Tobacco Control report issued today. The report graded the 50 states, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico in four categories: smokefree air, tobacco taxes, funding for tobacco prevention and restrictions on youth access to tobacco products. Oregon received the following grades: Tobacco Prevention and Control Spending, Grade: F; Smokefree Air, Grade: C; Cigarette Taxes, Grade: C; and Youth Access to Tobacco Products, Grade: D. Oregon was specifically cited for funding its Tobacco Prevention and Education Program at much less than the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) best practices minimum state spending requirement. The CDC recommends Oregon spend approximately $21.1 million, but there is currently only $4.7 million appropriated for the 2007 fiscal year. In September 2006, Governor Ted Kulongoski announced that he will push for an increase of 85 cents per pack in cigarette taxes in the 2007 legislative session, which would, in part, provide additional funding for the Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program."Preventing tobacco use saves lives and money. But, despite the high economic and human costs of smoking, Oregon has failed to provide full funding for its Tobacco Prevention and Education Program," said Sue Fratt, CEO of the American Lung Association of Oregon. "With the governor's proposal, there is a possibility for this to change. It is time for our state to step up and pass strong tobacco control policies to protect the health, and ultimately the lives, of its citizens."Another area of concern is the C Oregon received for "Smokefree Air." Approximately 35,000 Oregonians are still exposed to toxic secondhand smoke where they work. In June 2006, the Surgeon General released a new report, which stated, "There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Breathing even a little secondhand smoke can be harmful to your health.""With new evidence from the nation's leading health expert, and with our neighboring state Washington recently passing a strong, comprehensive smokefree workplace law, it is our hope that Oregon's legislators will close the loopholes in our current law to ensure that all workers are protected from secondhand smoke," said Fratt. "Now is the time for our legislators to make all workplaces 100 percent smokefree."Fratt added that everyone has the right to breathe clean air.The American Lung Association State of Tobacco Control Report is available online at www.lungoregon.org. For more information, please contact Dana Kaye with American Lung Association of Oregon at 503-924-4094, extension 19.