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Smoke-free EBR Celebrates 6-Month Anniversary; Air Quality Study Shows  
Ordinance is Making Workplaces Safer

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Baton Rouge, La.—As East Baton Rouge Parish celebrates its six-month anniversary of the Smoke-free ordinance, a new study shows indoor air pollution levels have fallen an incredible 98.8 percent since the law was implemented to protect workers, entertainers and patrons.

“This decrease is even more substantial than what we found when New Orleans passed its Smoke-free Law (96% reduction) so we are very pleased that the law is working as intended,” said Raegan Carter, a spokesperson for the Coalition.

Nationally recognized indoor air quality researchers at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, N.Y., conducted the study in 2016. It used state-of-the-art air pollution monitors at 11 area bars and three local casinos that allowed smoking at the time. The average air quality in those facilities exceeded the EPA threshold for unhealthy air and two facilities exceeded hazardous levels.

“This baseline study was a key factor in our efforts to pass a smoke-free law in the Parish. Bar workers had few choices at the time and casino workers looking to keep their jobs had no options but to work in smoking facilities,” Carter emphasized.

According to the study, fine particle air pollution is defined as less than 2.5 microns in diameter. Particles of this size are released in significant amounts from burning cigarettes and are easily inhaled into the lungs, causing a variety of adverse health effects, including cardiovascular and respiratory disease and possible death.

The EBR Ordinance took effect on June 1, 2018. Approximately a month and a half later, researchers re-visited the three casinos and three of the previously studied bars. The report concludes by saying, “In 2016, none of these venues had good air quality levels, whereas all of these venues had good air quality after the ordinance.”

“We were not surprised by the results but were certainly excited to have confirmation that Baton Rouge area bars and casinos are no longer exposing workers or patrons to hazardous levels of air pollution resulting from indoor smoking,” Carter said.

East Baton Rouge Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broom praised coalition workers and council members for their persistence and hard work in passing the ordinance and says the effort was a positive step toward enhancing the view that Baton Rouge is one of America’s most modern and progressive cities.

“We have now joined the list of almost 700 cities nationwide going smoke-free. That number is growing and we hope that other cities throughout Louisiana will follow our example and will soon come onboard,” Broome said.

CC Henson, General Manager of Happy’s Irish Pub in downtown Baton Rouge said, “We decided to go smoke-free before the ordinance. Initially it did upset our regular smoking crowd, but with our patio and cocktail service, we were able to adjust. I have a couple of girls who have severe allergies, so as far as the staff is concerned, they love it! Being a smoke-free bar has not only pleased our staff, but our non-smoking patrons enjoy our experience even more.”

H.R. Ziifle spoke on behalf of a growing number of entertainers who prefer smoke-free venues.

“As a guitarist and vocalist with MJ & the Redeemers, we really love playing in smoke-free environments. It helps us give our best performance, and no more raspy voice the next day, or clothing that smells like smoke,” he added.

Studies have shown that secondhand smoke contains more than 7000 chemicals including hundreds that are toxic and at least 69 that cause cancer. The U.S. Surgeon General has found that secondhand smoke is a proven cause of lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, serious respiratory illness, low birth rate and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The Surgeon General also found that secondhand smoke is responsible for tens of thousands of deaths in the United States each year and that there is no safe level of exposure. Those studies determined that smoke-free laws provide the only effective protection for workers and patrons in those facilities.

The Smoke-free EBR group is a tobacco control coalition consisting of concerned citizens and organizations working to reduce tobacco use and eliminate secondhand smoke exposure through education and polity change. For more information, visit [Smokefreeebr.org](http://Smokefreeebr.org)

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