



105 Mountain Avenue
Summit, New Jersey 07901
908 273-9368
Fax 908 273-9222
www.njgasp.org
E-mail info@njgasp.org

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Contact: Regina Carlson, Executive Director, 908 273-9368, 908 451-0658 (cell)

Air Testing Shows Separate Sections Don't Protect Casino Workers, Patrons

To measure the likely effect of the proposed Atlantic City Council ordinance 86 (the 75-25 split), New Jersey GASP tested the air in casinos in Rhode Island, where state law requires separately walled and ventilated sections, as does the Atlantic City ordinance. The testing showed that, as smoking was concentrated into smaller areas, the level of pollution increased. (Figure 1)

Researchers estimate that confining smoking in Atlantic City casinos to 25% of the gaming area could produce pollution levels as high as four times the levels in currently undivided casinos. For an employee who worked in that area full-time, his or her exposure would be five times the EPA annual limit. In the current, average casino environment, employee exposure exceeds the EPA limit by a factor of more than one and a half. (Figure 2)

The Rhode Island testing was done on January 26 through 29 as part of a continuing, joint project of New Jersey GASP and Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Regina Carlson, Executive Director of New Jersey GASP, commented, "We used scientific methods and expensive equipment, but anyone with common sense could anticipate that the more tightly you concentrate the pollution sources, the more highly you increase the pollution. And, sure enough, the smoking section that contained 30% of the gaming area of one casino was more polluted than the smoking section in another casino, where the smoking section contained 50% of the casino floor area. But, most important, for employees and patrons in any of these smoking areas, quite simply, the air is not fit to breathe."

The nonsmoking sections of the two Rhode Island casinos were also tested and were found to be far from smokefree. In one casino, the nonsmoking area ranged from 17% to 37% as polluted as the smoking section. In the other casino, the nonsmoking area was 39% as polluted as the smoking section. "How dismal," said Carlson, "that the separately walled and ventilated nonsmoking sections are still one-third as polluted as the extra-polluted smoking sections. Clearly, at least in Rhode Island casinos, this so-called solution doesn't work." (Figure 3)

The proposed Atlantic City ordinance sets no time limit for the casinos to construct the separate sections but does require casinos to designate smoking and nonsmoking areas by April 15, 2007. To predict the likely effect of that, New Jersey GASP cited new studies, released in December, 2006, on pollution in casinos where separate areas are merely designated. Researchers at the

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University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, tested casinos in New York and in Ontario and found that nonsmoking sections were 45% to 64 % as polluted as smoking sections, and were at levels described as "high" by the researchers. It was only when the Ontario casino went completely smokefree, as required by the May 2006 Smoke-Free Ontario Act, that the level of air quality fell within the "good" range, as defined by the EPA guidelines. (To see the full University of Waterloo report, go to www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/~gfong/smokefree and click on the December 2006 study on casinos.)

"Bottom line," said Carlson, "the only way to protect employees and patrons is to make casinos smokefree." She cited data from New Jersey GASP's 2006 air testing in New Jersey casinos, including in July when gambling was suspended and casinos were essentially smokefree. Then, she said, "Every Atlantic City casino had good air quality, within EPA limits, air as clean as outdoors, and as smokefree as restaurants and bars throughout the state." The 2006 report executive summary and three charts of key findings are at:
http://www.njgasp.org/i_conditions_airmon06_execsumm.pdf
http://www.njgasp.org/i_conditions_airmon06_charts.pdf.

attached:

three figures on January 2007 testing

2006 study executive summary and three charts of key findings

Increase in Air Pollution Levels in Casino Smoking Areas as the Smoking Area is Reduced in Proportionate Size

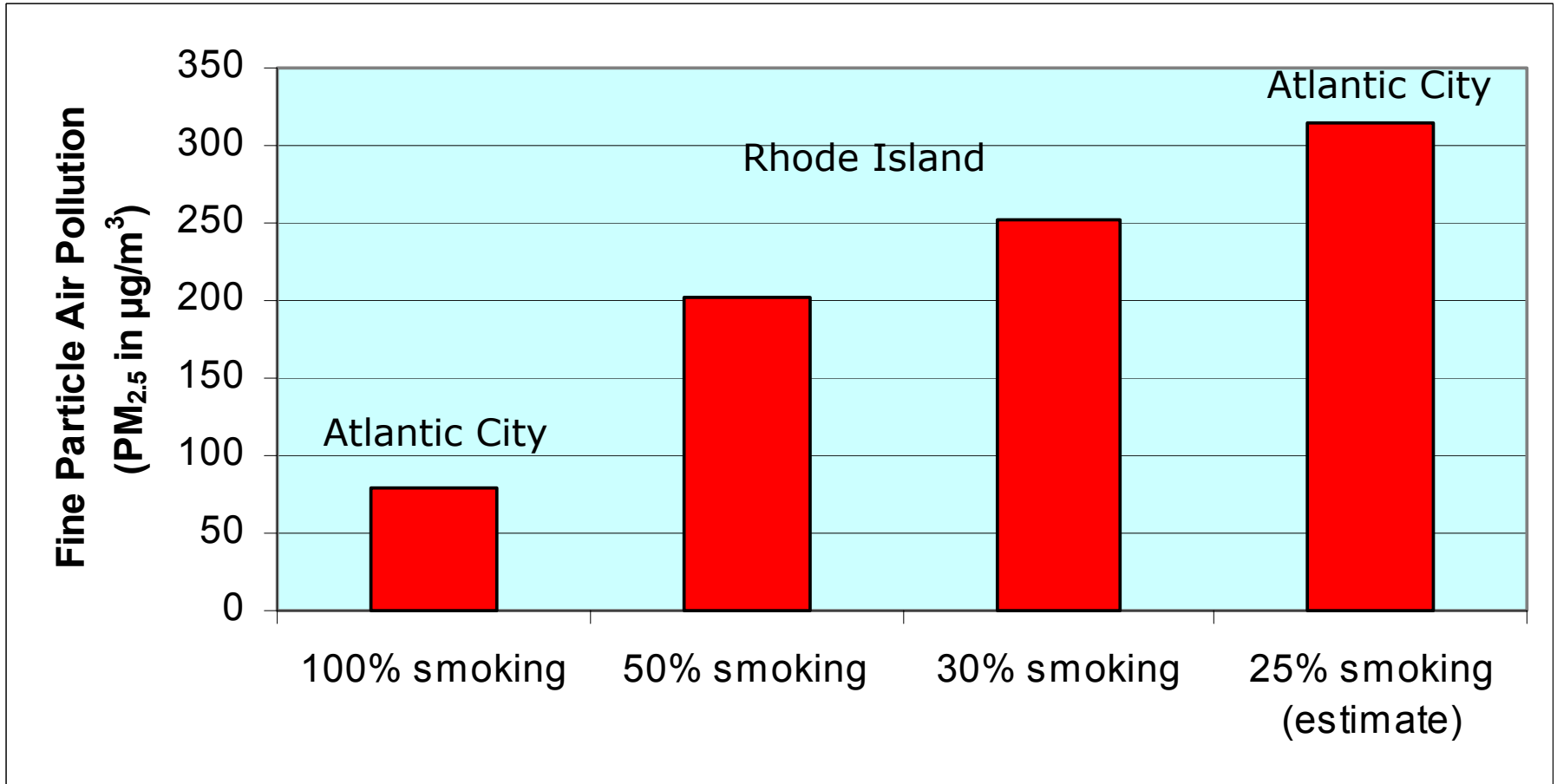


Figure 1

Annual Employee Exposure to Air Pollution in Enclosed Smoking Areas in Atlantic City Casinos

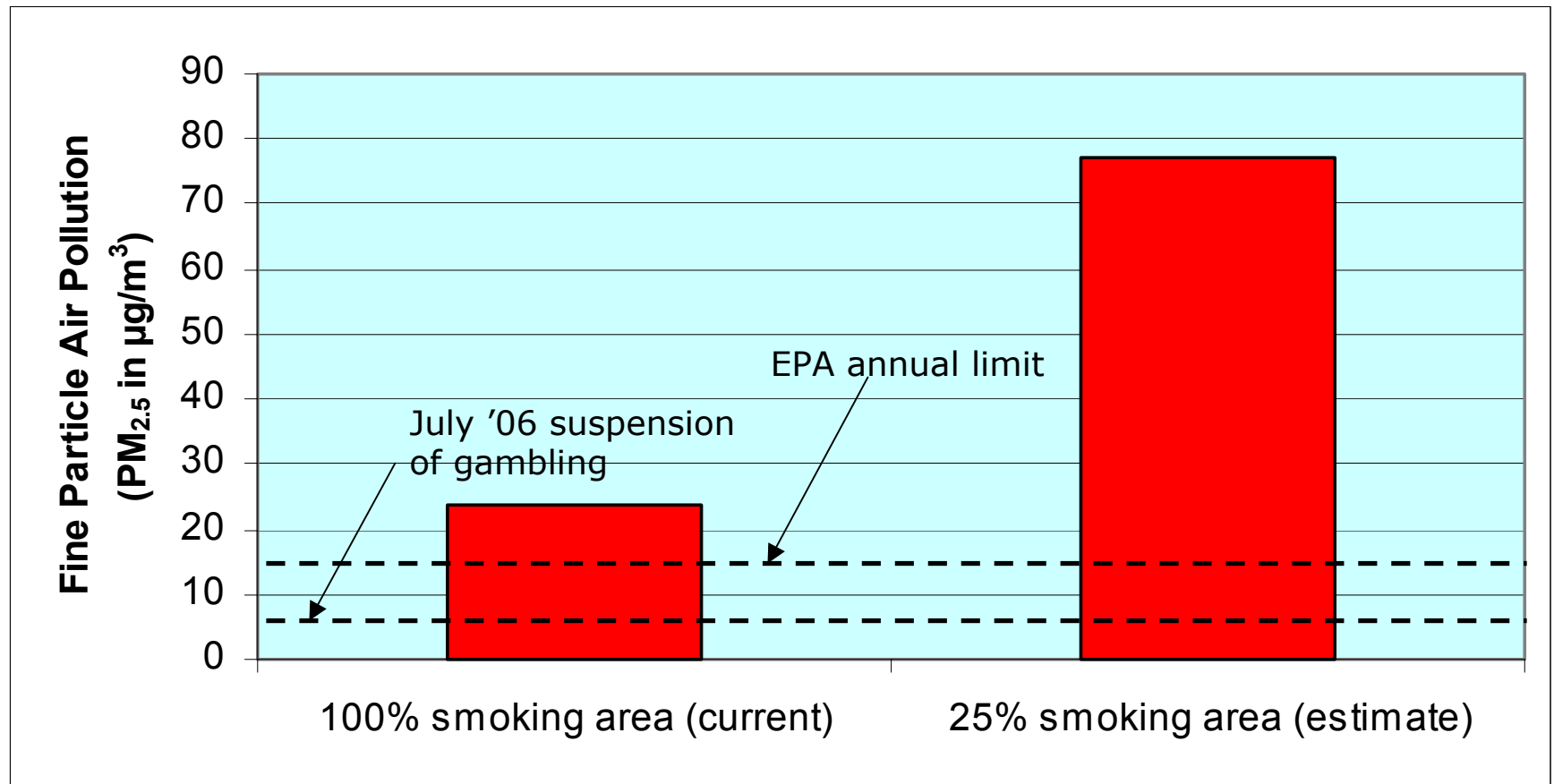
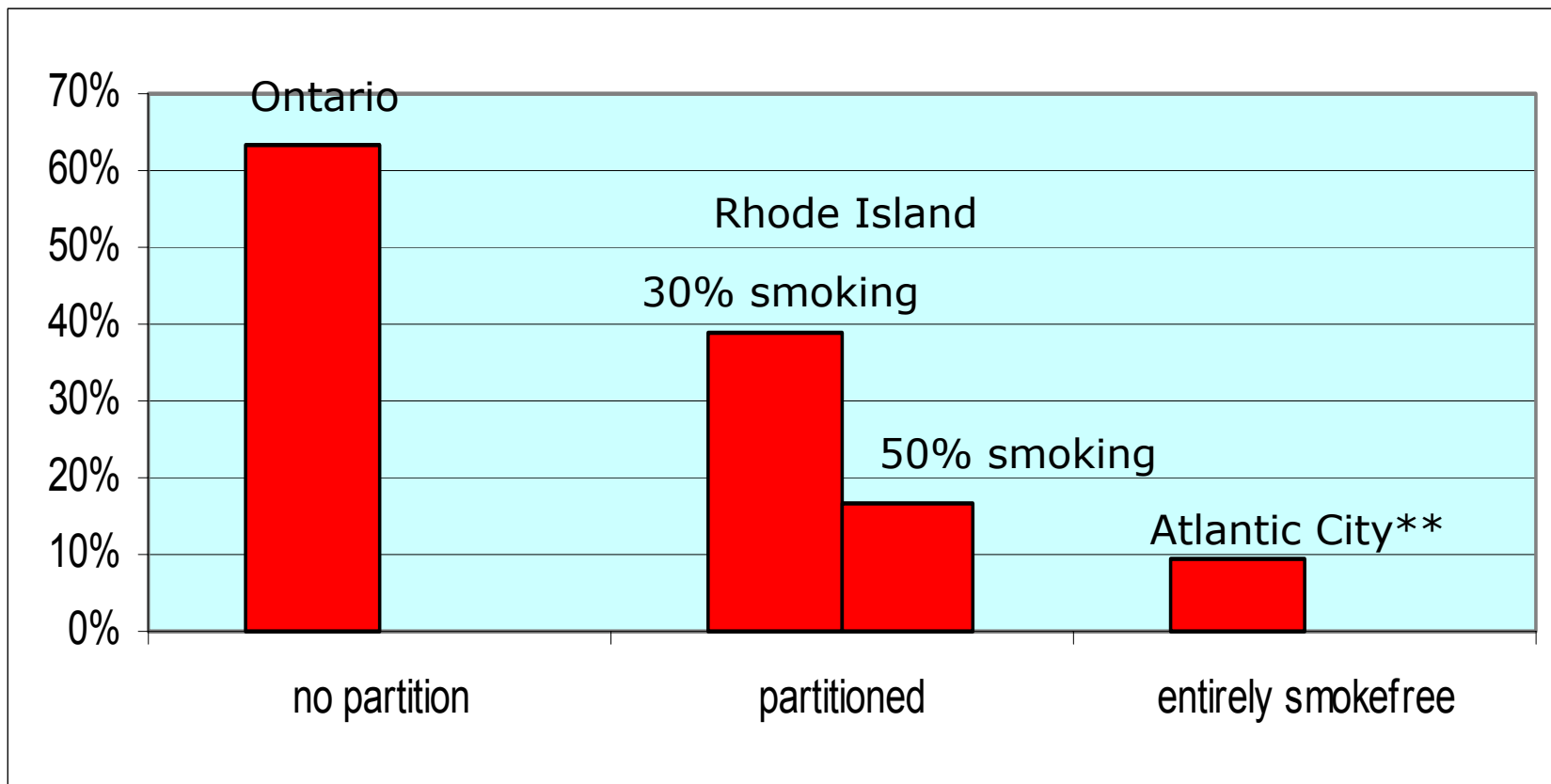


Figure 2

Effect of Different Methods of Control on the Air Pollution Levels in Nonsmoking Sections (expressed as a percentage of the pollution level in the smoking section of the same casino*)



*e.g., the Ontario nonsmoking section was 64% as polluted as the smoking section

**ratio during July '06 suspension of gambling

Figure 3