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**New study by University of Nevada professor shows
majority of gamblers are non-smokers**

*In light of recent legislation banning smoking in certain locales,
study suggests impact on gaming industry may not be as significant as first thought*

**(NOTE TO MEDIA: Chris Pritsos will be available for interviews on Friday, Dec. 1,
from 9:30 a.m. to noon PDT. Contact Pritsos directly at 775-784-6443.)**

RENO, Nev. – A new study by a University of Nevada, Reno researcher indicates that approximately four out of five gamblers in Nevada are non-smokers. The results suggest that the economic implications of smoking bans throughout the United States may not be as great as originally believed.

According to data in the study that included 17,000 gamblers in the state's primary tourist/casino centers – Las Vegas, Reno/Sparks and Lake Tahoe – similar results were found for all three locales. About 21.5 percent of gamblers in Las Vegas were smokers; 22.6 percent of gamblers in Reno/Sparks were smokers; 17 percent of gamblers in Lake Tahoe were smokers.

“This has been a big issue not only for Nevada but nationally and internationally, wherever gaming is allowed,” said Chris Pritsos, a professor of nutrition at the University who conducted the study. “These issues have recently come to the forefront with the ballot initiatives, Questions 4 and 5, during the last election in Nevada, as well as a recent smoking ban in Colorado, where gaming was exempted at the last minute and with a recent Atlantic City, New Jersey City Council proposed ordinance that would ban smoking in Atlantic City casinos.

“The big question has been: is the number of gamblers who smoke more in line with what the gaming industry has claimed, upward to 70 percent, or is it more in line with what health organizations throughout the country have suggested, that the number of gamblers who smoke is similar to the overall percentage of the U.S. population that smokes?”

“This is a critically important distinction to make, as much of the argument against banning smoking in public places has centered around the economic impact such bans would have on industries like gaming.”

Pritsos worked with state health agencies and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in formulating, funding and executing the study.

“The percentages we found were very similar to the overall percentage of the U.S. population that smokes, which is 20.9 percent,” Pritsos said. “These numbers are far below the 70 percent figure that is often put forward by pro-smoking groups and individuals.”

Pritsos said the study also found that the percentage of gamblers who smoke at rural casinos is about 36.5 percent, and the percentage of gamblers who smoke at local grocery, drug and convenience stores in Nevada is about 42 percent.

“Although these numbers are higher than the numbers we found for casino/tourist destinations, they are still well below the 70 percent figure that you always hear,” Pritsos said. “The percentage of smokers at small rural or non-tourist dependent gaming establishments may better reflect the percentage of smokers in those local/rural communities than that of the overall U.S. population.

“Overall, when you take all of these numbers together, the results suggest that the percent of gamblers who smoke at tourist destination casinos are almost identical to the overall percentage of smokers in the U.S.”

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Founded in 1874 as Nevada’s oldest, land-grant university the University of Nevada, Reno has more than 16,000 students, four campuses and hosts Cooperative Extension educational programs in all Nevada counties. It is ranked as one of the country’s top 150 research institutions by the Carnegie Foundation, and is home to America’s sixth-largest study abroad program, as well as the state’s oldest and largest medical school.