

# NJBreathes

Tobacco vs. Kids - Where New Jersey draws the line!

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## **NEW POLL FINDS NEARLY SEVEN IN 10 NEW JERSEY VOTERS SUPPORT SMOKE-FREE CASINOS**

**LAWRENCEVILLE, NJ (October 31, 2007)** – A new poll finds voters from across New Jersey express strong support for 100 percent smoke-free casinos. By more than a two-to-one margin (69 percent to 28 percent), voters support extending the statewide Smoke-Free Air Act to cover casino gaming floors. This support comes from a broad-based coalition of voters across the state, including 72 percent of Democrats, 68 percent of independents and 63 percent of Republicans.

New Jersey residents and visitors have been enjoying the benefits of the Smoke-Free Air Act for more than a year and a previous study found strong support for the statewide law. The new poll confirms that voters are voicing their support for 100 percent smoke-free casinos in the Garden State. The survey of 688 registered New Jersey voters was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute and released today by NJBreathes and the Institute of Medicine and Public Health of New Jersey.

“New Jerseyans have embraced the Smoke-free Air Act and are now expressing their desire for a 100 percent smoke-free casino destination, as well as the need to protect the casino workers who are currently forced to work in hazardous conditions,” says Dr. George DiFerdinando, Chair of New Jersey Breathes statewide tobacco control coalition. “These findings certainly point to the need for New Jersey’s legislators to take action and extend the Smoke-free Air Act to protect all casino employees in Atlantic City.”

Other findings of the survey include:

- Voters understand the health harms of secondhand smoke. Eighty-six (86) percent of New Jersey voters believe that exposure to secondhand smoke is a serious (66 percent) or moderate (20 percent) health hazard.
- Voters believe that all casino workers should be protected from secondhand smoke. Eighty-five (85) percent of voters agree that New Jersey’s casino workers should be protected from exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace.

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- Voters place priority on the interests of customers and workers breathing clean air in casinos.

Concerns about exposure to secondhand smoke translate to the very strong belief among voters (by a margin of 83 percent to 10 percent) that the interests of customers and employees in breathing clean air are more important than the interests of smokers who want to smoke inside casinos. Even among smokers, 62 percent of respondents indicate that the interest of customers and employees in breathing clean air is more important than their interest in smoking inside casinos.

If New Jersey extends its 100 percent smoke-free law to all casinos, 18 percent of voters say they would go to casinos more often compared to 7 percent who say they would go less often. A majority of voters (74 percent) say that making casinos smoke-free would have no impact on how often they visit gaming establishments.

The intention of voters to continue visiting New Jersey's casinos is not surprising given survey respondents' view that these establishments would be healthier and more enjoyable if they were smoke-free. Nearly nine out of ten voters (88 percent) believe that smoke-free casinos would be healthier, and 82 percent want to be able to enjoy casinos in New Jersey without smelling like smoke at the end of the evening.

A copy of the survey findings is available at: <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/njpoll/>

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*This survey was conducted by telephone September 27-30, 2007 with a scientifically selected random sample of 801 New Jersey adults, including 688 registered voters. The figures in this release are based on the sample of registered voters. All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for the registered voter sample is  $\pm 3.7$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to think the state was in good economic condition, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.3 and 53.7 percent ( $50 \pm 3.7$ ) had all New Jersey voters been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by race or age are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. The verbatim wording of all questions asked is available in the full findings. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows. This study was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute.*

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*New Jersey Breathes is an independent, collective voice for tobacco control convened by the Medical Society of NJ/Institute of Medicine and Public Health. More than 50 leading state, health, non-profit and civic organizations, including the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, American Lung Association and NJ GASP, participate in the coalition. New Jersey Breathes seeks to demoralize tobacco use and drive down smoking rates, especially among children, in the state.*