



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

## Senator Carlucci, Assemblywoman Galef Announce Legislation Banning Smoking on Playgrounds

DAVID CARLUCCI August 22, 2012

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### *Ban Would Protect Children During Most Popular Play Times*

**OSSINING, NY** – Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Orange) and Assemblywoman Sandy Galef (D-Westchester/Putnam) today joined with anti-smoking advocates and officials to urge immediate action on state legislation (A.6451/S7627) that will prohibit smoking at public playgrounds where children under twelve are present during the hours between sunrise and sunset. This legislation would not preempt local municipalities which have enacted more

stringent anti-smoking policies.

“The effects of second-hand smoke have proven dangerous to all who are surrounded by it, and especially harmful to children,” **said Assemblywoman Galef**. “These children are still growing and the second-hand smoke they inhale is a danger to their physical and mental growth. Allowing smoking on playgrounds sends the wrong signal to our kids.”

“Medical experts agree that second-hand smoke can cause serious health defects and our goal is to do everything we can to prevent this from happening,” **said Senator Carlucci**. “This does more than keep our air clean, but also sets in place a uniform standard so that all New Yorkers will benefit.”

Although this legislation has consistently passed the Assembly, the bill stalled in the Senate from the lack of an active sponsor until recently in the Senate. Senator Carlucci became a sponsor of the bill back in June 2012.

Second-hand smoke has significant harmful effects on children, putting them at risk of severe respiratory diseases and can often hinder the growth of their lungs. Effects of second-hand smoke can severely alter their health throughout their lifetimes, causing permanent damaging health defects. In addition the level of second-hand smoke a child is exposed to is directly proportional to the likelihood of the child becoming a smoker as an adolescent or an adult.

Aside from the harmful effects of smoking, smoking on playgrounds sets a poor example for all children. Young children are more likely to place items found on the ground into their mouths, such as discarded cigarette butts on a playground. This is a serious health risk for these children, as ingested discarded cigarettes are poisonous and could lead to severe medical ailments.

"The physicians of Westchester County are in support of A6451/S7627, the proposed legislation to ban smoking in playgrounds. Tobacco use and second-hand smoke are associated with significantly increased risks of cancer and cardiovascular disease. Nonsmoking infants and children who are chronically exposed to environmental tobacco smoke have an increased risk of respiratory disease and malignancy. The individual health cost and societal cost of taking care of such medical problems and lost productivity must be considered when addressing a smoking ban. We need to protect our children and our future by passing this legislation," **said Thomas T. Lee, MD, President of the Westchester County Medical Society.**

"Parks and playgrounds and other recreational areas should be places where people can go and not have to worry about second hand exposure. Clean smoke-free air is vital to our well-being and helps to reduce the incidence of asthma episodes which can be exacerbated by second-hand smoke. The U.S Surgeon General has stated that there is no safe level of second-hand smoke exposure; therefore any preventative measure to reduce second-hand smoke exposure is a benefit to everyone," **said Makeda James, Westchester County Coordinator of POW'R Against Tobacco.**

"When parents bring their children to the playground they have a right to expect that they'll be safe. Unfortunately, when smoking is allowed it creates an unsafe environment, not to mention a poor example for our children. Protecting kids from environmental tobacco smoke is the right thing to do," **says Diane Moore, Putnam County Reality Check Coordinator.**

"There are few things that disturb me more than the subjection of a child to something that is harmful to them or endangers them in any way. This is worsened when the harm is done in an area that is made specifically for children. The dangers of second-hand smoke to children are well-documented and severe. I have personally witnessed and experienced smoking in playgrounds when I was a small child, and when I take my sisters of two and

seven years to the playgrounds near my home. It both confuses and irritates me when I see someone willfully jeopardizing a child's health. It is our duty to stop this careless behavior so we can protect children and keep our playgrounds healthy and safe places to be," **said Dan Graap, a 17 year old Reality Check member, from Mahopac.**

According to the New York City Department of Health smoking in select City parks declined by two-thirds between the fall of 2010 and the fall of 2011 one year after implementing a ban of their own. The Department also found that smoking-related litter on beaches declined by about two-thirds between the summer of 2010 and 2011.

"New York City's smoke-free air laws have made city parks, playgrounds and beaches cleaner and safer for everyone," **said New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley.** "Children are among the most vulnerable to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, and banning smoking on playgrounds is an obvious and important part of protecting them. I am hopeful that with this legislation New York State will follow in New York City's footsteps and make all playgrounds across the state smoke-free."

Assemblywoman Galef has also written to the local municipalities in the 90<sup>th</sup> Assembly District urging them to consider enacting their own no-smoking bans. Municipalities that have adopted similar no-smoking bans at the local level have shown a tremendous amount of success in reducing the amount of smokers in parks, and fewer cigarette butts on beaches and playgrounds. In some cases, the local restrictions are stricter than what the state legislation proposes. In June 2012, the Town of Ossining passed a resolution that prohibits smoking at playgrounds.

"This legislation is overdue and we want to thank Assemblywoman Galef and Senator Carlucci for moving this issue to the forefront. It is high time that we worry more about the health of children and less about someone's supposed right to smoke. If smoking only

affected smokers that would be bad enough, but forcing children to breathe in second-hand smoke is wrong and we need to do what we can to stop it now," **said Henry Atterbury, Town of Ossining Superintendent for Parks and Recreation.**

"Thanks to the leadership of Assemblywoman Galef and Senator Carlucci, children in New York will be able to play outside without breathing in second-hand smoke. I urge their colleagues to support this measure to keep our children safe," **said Westchester County Legislator Catherine Borgia.**

"Our public playgrounds and athletic fields are places where every deep breath should be free of second-hand smoke," **said Police Benevolent Association of New York State President Manuel Vilar.** "Assemblywoman Galef and Senator Carlucci have sponsored this common sense legislation and the PBA of New York State supports its passage."

"We're all responsible for providing our children safe and healthy places to play and enjoy their childhood. Exposure to second-hand smoke is detrimental to their well being and I support legislation that seeks to provide them an environment free from these harmful fumes," **said Felix Flores, recently retired principal of the Claremont Elementary School in Ossining.**

According to the CDC, more than 126 million nonsmoking Americans continue to be exposed to second-hand smoke in homes, vehicles, workplaces, and public places. Almost 60% of U.S. children 3-11 years old, or 22 million children, are exposed to second-hand smoke.