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**GOVERNOR IS RIGHT—
TIME FOR SMOKE-FREE AIR IS NOW**

Harrisburg, PA---The American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association and the Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco are pleased Governor Edward Rendell included his support of tobacco control initiatives in the Health Care Reform Plan released today. His endorsement for a clean indoor air initiative, an increase in the cigarette excise tax, and an excise tax on smokeless tobacco products and cigars all show the Governor's commitment to protecting all residents from the deadly effects of tobacco use and secondhand smoke.

On June 27, 2006 the U.S. Surgeon General released a report declaring that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. The report from the nation's top public health official confirms that secondhand smoke causes lung cancer and heart disease. The report also concludes that eliminating smoking in all indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke.

All public places and worksites should be 100 percent smoke-free. Every community and state – including ours – should pass and strengthen laws to eliminate all exposure to secondhand smoke. The passage of recent laws in Allegheny County, Erie, Philadelphia, and Scranton indicate a strong support at the local level for smoke-free air.

Pennsylvania currently has an excise tax of \$1.35 per pack of cigarettes. The Commonwealth is the only state which does not have an excise tax on smokeless tobacco products or cigars. Studies show that for each 10% increase in the price of cigarettes, youth smoking is reduced by about 7% and overall cigarette consumption by 3 to 5 %.

It is time for Pennsylvania to put these measures into place, which will aid in the prevention of tobacco related diseases, reduce health care costs, and improve the lives of all residents.

