

Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust Board of Directors

“Restoring Local Rights to Protect Oklahoma Workers from Secondhand Smoke”

November 14, 2012

WHEREAS the U.S. Surgeon General concluded in 2006 that “secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance, but a serious health hazard that causes premature death and disease”, and

WHEREAS secondhand smoke contains more than 50 carcinogens and at least 250 chemicals known to be toxic or carcinogenic, and nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke increase their risk of developing lung cancer by 20 percent to 30 percent, and

WHEREAS nonsmoking adults who are exposed to secondhand smoke at work increase their risk of developing heart disease by 25 to 30 percent, and

WHEREAS most states require all indoor workplaces to be smokefree while Oklahoma’s state smoking laws still fail to protect many Oklahomans from regular exposure to secondhand smoke inside workplaces, and

WHEREAS the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) reaffirmed in 2010 that ventilated smoking rooms do not protect workers from the hazards of secondhand smoke and “the only means of effectively eliminating health risk associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity,” and

WHEREAS Oklahoma state smoking law currently prohibits any municipality from adopting any ordinance which restricts indoor exposure to secondhand smoke to a greater extent than in state law, and

WHEREAS internal tobacco industry documents state that the section of our state smoking law that prohibits such local ordinances was passed by the Oklahoma State Legislature at the request of the tobacco industry, and

WHEREAS several extensive scientific studies have found that communities with workplace smoking bans have decreased hospital admissions for heart attacks within 12 months of the ban’s effective date, and

WHEREAS municipalities in each of the states bordering Oklahoma – including 33 cities and towns in Texas – have adopted local ordinances requiring all indoor workplaces to be completely smokefree, and

WHEREAS restoring these local rights in Oklahoma is the number one legislative priority of the Oklahoma Health Improvement Plan, and

WHEREAS the Oklahoma State Board of Health, the Oklahoma Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Advisory Committee and many other health, civic and business groups have previously adopted similar resolutions or formal position statements

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust respectfully recommends that the Oklahoma State Legislature repeal the clause in our state smoking law that prohibits local governments from adopting smoke-free workplace ordinances.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if the Oklahoma State Legislature does not choose to restore the right of Oklahoma communities to take action and retains exclusive state-level control of this critical health issue, a statewide law be enacted to protect all Oklahoma workers from exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke in the workplace.