



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Phil Andrews

For Immediate Release

June 9, 2005

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Councilman Andrews releases official data refuting the Restaurant Association and District Councilwoman Carol Schwartz on the economic impact of Montgomery's Smoking Ban

Rockville – Montgomery County Councilman Phil Andrews released official data today that shows that the number of facilities licensed to sell alcoholic beverages for on-premise consumption has increased significantly since the County's law prohibiting smoking inside restaurants took effect in 2003. Andrews was the law's lead sponsor.

According to data compiled by the Montgomery County Board of License Commissioners, the number of facilities licensed to sell alcoholic beverages for on-premise consumption rose from 659 as of July 2003, to 673 as of July 2004, and to 698 as of January 2005. The numbers don't include private clubs that are licensed to sell alcoholic beverages for on-premise consumption because they are not covered by the County's Smoke-free Restaurant law). The Montgomery County Council approved the smoking ban on July 1, 2003; it took effect October 9, 2003.

The Restaurant Association of Maryland, in its testimony during the 2005 session of the Maryland General Assembly against a State bill that would require all restaurants and bars be smoke-free, claimed that the number of liquor-licensed businesses in Montgomery County dropped from 507 to 402 after the County's smoking ban took effect.

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page two

District of Columbia Councilwoman Carol Schwartz has repeatedly cited the Restaurant Association's numbers (including in a column in the Washington Post on May 29) in arguing against a proposed Smoke-free Workplace law for the District that would protect all restaurant and bar workers from second-hand smoke.

"Councilwoman Schwartz's claims and those of the Restaurant Association are flatly wrong," said Andrews. "Not only are the numbers up for county facilities open to the public that sell alcoholic beverages for on-premise consumption, sales tax revenue of county restaurants has increased by more than 7% since the Smoke-free Restaurant law took effect, and dozens of new non-fast food restaurants have opened. Most important, restaurant workers and patrons are breathing safe rather than hazardous air."

Two smoke-free workplace bills are before the City Council this year. One has been assigned to Councilwoman Schwartz's committee; the other to the Council's Health Committee, chaired by Councilman David Catania.

The District of Columbia Council will hold a public hearing on the bill assigned to Councilwoman Schwartz's committee on Tuesday, June 14th at 10 a.m.

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