



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

October 13, 2003

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COUNCILMEMBER PHIL ANDREWS CALLS ON GAITHERSBURG AND ROCKVILLE CITY TO PROHIBIT SMOKING INSIDE OF RESTAURANTS

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Montgomery County Councilmember Phil Andrews today urged the Mayor and Councils of Gaithersburg and Rockville to act promptly to protect restaurant workers and patrons by prohibiting smoking inside of restaurants in their respective cities. Andrews represents Gaithersburg and Rockville and was the lead sponsor of the County's Smoke-free Restaurant Law.

In a letter sent to Gaithersburg Mayor Sidney Katz and Rockville Mayor, Larry Giammo, Andrews wrote that "Gaithersburg and Rockville are by far the two largest municipalities that are not covered by the County's Smoke-free Restaurant Law, "It is crucial for public health that the same protections are provided in Gaithersburg and Rockville as in the county at-large."

"I know that you and members of the City Council share the same concern for public health that motivated the County Council to overwhelmingly adopt the Smoke-free Restaurant Law. Now that the Circuit Court has ruled that the opponents of the law are unlikely to prevail on the merits, I am writing as the law's lead sponsor and as the district councilmember from Gaithersburg and Rockville to urge that the Cities act promptly to protect restaurant workers and patrons from dangerous second-hand tobacco smoke."

Andrews stated in his letter that ventilation systems are not an alternative to smoke-free restaurants. He noted that the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers has concluded that ventilation systems don't remove the hazardous particles in second-hand smoke. He also noted that numerous studies of the economic impact of smoke-free restaurant laws in other jurisdictions have shown either neutral or positive effects on restaurant revenues.

More than 100 jurisdictions in the United States have adopted smoke-free restaurant laws, including California, Delaware, Florida, Lexington, Kentucky, Maine, and New York City.

The Montgomery County Council overwhelmingly adopted the measure, 8-1, on July 1. It was co-sponsored by Councilmembers Nancy Floreen (D-At-large), George Levanthal (D-At-large), Tom Perez (D-Silver Spring) and Michael Knapp (D-Upcounty), and signed

into law by County Executive Douglas M. Duncan on July 10. The law took effect October 9.

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October 13, 2003

Honorable Sidney Katz, Mayor
City of Gaithersburg

Honorable Larry Giammo, Mayor
City of Rockville

Dear Mayor Katz and Mayor Giammo:

I know that you and the members of your respective City Councils share the same concern for the public health that motivated the Montgomery County Council to overwhelmingly adopt the Smoke-free Restaurant Law. Now that the Circuit Court has ruled that opponents of the law are unlikely to prevail on the merits, I am writing as the law's lead sponsor and as the district councilmember from Gaithersburg and Rockville to urge that the Cities act promptly to protect restaurant workers and patrons from dangerous second-hand tobacco smoke by prohibiting smoking inside of restaurants in your respective cities.

One of the reasons that the County Council approved the measure as a law rather than as a health regulation was to honor Gaithersburg's request at the public hearing that we follow that approach so that the City could take its own action, which Assistant City Manager Fred Felton testified that the City intended to do.

Gaithersburg and Rockville are by far the two largest municipalities not covered by the County's Smoke-free Restaurant Law. It is crucial for public health that the same protections are provided in Gaithersburg and Rockville as in the County at-large.

The dangers of second-hand smoke are both immediate and long-term. Second-hand smoke impairs heart function within the time it takes to eat a meal, and can trigger life-threatening asthma attacks. Repeated exposure significantly increases the chance of lung cancer. The American Lung Association, the American Cancer Society, and the Montgomery County Medical Society all testified in strong support of smoke-free restaurants.

Prohibiting smoking inside of restaurants is necessary to protect public health. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers have concluded that air quality cannot be made acceptable in the presence of second-hand smoke because ventilation systems cannot adequately remove the hazardous particles in second-hand smoke. Numerous studies of the economic impact of smoke-free restaurant laws across the Nation have found either neutral or positive effects on restaurant revenues.

For all of these reasons, I urge you and your respective Councils to act promptly to prohibit smoking inside of restaurants in Gaithersburg and Rockville.

Sincerely,
Phil Andrews