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Basham Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 22, 2009

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Basham Cosponsors Legislation to Put Issue of Smokefree Workplaces Before Michigan Voters

Bill would establish a ballot proposal to let voters determine if workplaces should go smokefree

LANSING, Mich. — Senator Ray Basham (D-Taylor) joined with Senator Tupac A. Hunter (D-Detroit) to introduce a bill today that would put the issue of smokefree workplaces in Michigan on the 2010 statewide ballot. Under Senate Bill 469, the ballot proposal would call for all worksites to be smokefree and not include exemptions for restaurants, bars, or casinos.

“For my entire legislative career, I have fought on behalf of a majority of Michigan’s citizens who feel Michigan workplaces should be smokefree, only to have my concerns fall on deaf ears or be drowned out by special interests,” said Sen. Basham. “I had hoped to protect the health of Michigan workers through state legislation, but I am confident that if we let the people of Michigan decide at the ballot box, we can finally move Michigan forward on this issue.”

Recent studies show that nearly 2/3 of Michigan voters support a workplace ban that includes bars and restaurants. Unfortunately, Michigan remains one of the 15 states left that has yet to pass legislation to create smokefree workplaces. Thirty-five states have already passed similar legislation to protect their workers from deadly exposure to secondhand smoke, including Ohio, Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota.

“For the past 10 years, the Legislature has tried and failed to pass a smokefree worksite bill that would protect our citizens from smoking-related diseases,” said Sen. Hunter. “Instead of continuing to argue about exemptions and concessions, we need to go to the voters and let them decide what is best for Michigan.”

Data from the New York City Department of Finance shows that tax receipts increased by 8.7 percent, or approximately \$1.4 million, after the city went smokefree. Between March 2003, when the city went smokefree, and December 2003 there were 10,600 new jobs in its bars and restaurants. Florida saw similar results, and reported that retail receipts for taverns and bars that served food remain unaffected by its smokefree law.

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