

# **Smoke-Free Environments Law Project**

## **The Center for Social Gerontology**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **End of Year Heralds Record Numbers of Smoke-Free Apartments in Michigan & the Nation**

"As 2008 comes to a close, we are delighted that hundreds of thousands of apartments all across Michigan are now totally smoke-free" according to Jim Bergman, Co-Director of The Center for Social Gerontology, Inc. in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which operates the Smoke-Free Environments Law Project (SFELP). "In 2004 when the MI Smoke-Free Apartment Initiative began, it was almost impossible to find apartments that had smoke-free or no-smoking policies. In four short years, smoke-free apartments now abound and are the clear trend."

"Smoke-free multi-unit housing is fast-becoming the 'hot' new amenity in Michigan rental housing. Hundreds of thousands of market-rate rental housing units are now covered by no-smoking policies. Well over 15,000 units of 'affordable' housing are also smoke-free. And, 28 public housing commissions in Michigan have smoke-free policies for some or all their buildings, covering over 3,500 units," said Bergman.

Many of those apartments can be located by going to SFELP's MISmokeFreeApartment.org listing at <http://www.MISmokeFreeApartment.org/listing.html>

### **Smoke-Free Apartments Are a Trend in Michigan and Nationally**

While Michigan is one of the pace-setters in the nation in the realm of smoke-free multi-unit housing, this is a national trend, as well. Both the National Apartment Association and the National Multi-Housing Council have highlighted smoke-free housing as a growing movement and have told their members that smoke-free policies are good for business as well as health.

Dave Watkins, former Chairman of the Board of the National Apartment Association, is quoted in the December, 2007 issue of UNITS magazine as saying "Smoke-free apartment communities not only promote a healthy resident population, but also a healthy bottom line for owners and investors." The cover, feature section of the December UNITS magazine is on "Clearing the Air: Industry Discusses Trend Toward Smoke-Free Housing", in which the editors introduce this feature by stating: "In this new era, many owners and managers are choosing not to ignore the

problems that can result from a smoke-friendly community. They are finding that keeping the smoke out is the best way to retain both residents and profits."

### **Over 100 Public Housing Authorities Nationwide Smoke-Free; 600% Increase in 4 Years**

"As 2008 ends, there are now at least 102 local public housing authorities in the United States with smoke-free policies for some or all their apartment buildings," said Bergman. "Of the 102 local housing authorities that adopted smoke-free policies, about 85 were adopted since the beginning of January, 2005; an average of about 1.8 per month. That constitutes an increase in the number of housing authorities with smoke-free policies of 600% in 4 years."

Public housing authorities with smoke-free policies exist in 17 states, as follows: Michigan (28), Minnesota (19), Maine (18), California (7), Nebraska (6), Colorado (6), Washington (4), New Hampshire (3), Oregon (2), New Jersey (2), Wisconsin, Florida, Idaho, Montana, Indiana, Kentucky, and Alaska. Access a listing at <http://www.tcsg.org/sfelp/SFHousingAuthorities.pdf>

### **Apartment Owners Know Its Legal & Cost-Efficient to be Smoke-Free**

Until the MISmokeFreeApartment initiative began in mid-2004, most apartment owners in Michigan thought it was against the law to make their apartment buildings smoke-free and include no-smoking clauses in their rental leases. Once owners realized it was legal to make their apartments totally smoke-free, they began to transition their buildings to smoke-free status.

"Apartment owners understand the high maintenance costs associated with having smokers in their units, including cigarette burn marks, nicotine and tar-stained walls, and carpets that reek of tobacco smoke. Smoke-free policies dramatically reduce maintenance costs when smokers move out and their apartment units have to be refurbished for new tenants. The cost savings can be \$2,000 to \$8,000 per unit," Bergman said. Owners also know the dangers of cigarette-caused fires. Plus, now that only about 20% of adults smoke, owners see that the market niche for smoke-free apartments is enormous.

### **Surveys Show Residents Want Smoke-Free Apartments**

Resident surveys by Michigan apartment owners reflect what surveys in Minnesota, California, Maine and elsewhere have found: a sizeable majority of apartment residents greatly prefer smoke-free apartment buildings. At least 75% to 80% of residents in most apartments surveyed say they want smoke-free housing, and over half say they have moved or would move if secondhand tobacco smoke seeped into their unit from adjoining units.

According to the Michigan Adult Tobacco Survey, in 2005 over 80% of households surveyed said they had a smoke-free policy in their own home; that percentage is increasing yearly. Apartment residents are saying that they don't want their smoke-free home/unit inundated with their neighbor's secondhand smoke. And, many smokers feel the same way and take their smoking outside to protect their families and their furniture.

### **The Trend is Clear: Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing is Becoming the Norm**

Bergman concluded by saying: "No one could have predicted the enormous growth in smoke-free multi-unit buildings that we've witnessed in 2007 and 2008. The trend is clear, smoke-free multi-unit housing is fast becoming the norm in Michigan and other parts of the nation. Whether its market-rate, affordable or public housing, smoke-free is the hot new amenity that owners and residents want."

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To access the MISmokeFreeApartment web site to learn more, go to <http://www.mismokefreeapartment.org> To access the Michigan smoke-free apartment listing directly, go to <http://www.mismokefreeapartment.org/listing.html> For more on smoke-free apartments, go to the SFELP "Apartments" site at <http://www.tcsg.org/sfelp/apartment.htm> which also has links to related sites.

The MI Smoke-Free Apartment Initiative is a partnership of local health departments, the Tobacco Section of the Michigan Department of Community Health, and the Smoke-Free Environments Law Project of The Center for Social Gerontology, Inc.