



Smoke Free Act takes effect Jan. 1

By CityBusiness staff report

2006-12-21 10:58 AM CST

NEW ORLEANS — The Louisiana Smoke-free Air Act 815 takes effect Jan. 1 giving restaurant and bar owners a new benchmark for doing business.

To comply with the Louisiana Smoke-Free Air Act, businesses must remove ashtrays and post no-smoking signs.

The law allows local governments to pass smoke-free laws stronger than state law, giving municipalities in Louisiana the power to require all workplaces, including stand-alone bars and casinos, to be smoke-free as well.

"The Louisiana Smoke-Free Air Act (Act 815) is arguably one of the most significant public health victories in Louisiana in recent history and is sure to have a long term, positive impact on the health of our citizens and the state's health care system," said Dr. Jimmy Guidry, Louisiana state health officer. "Our lawmakers took a stand for health by listening and responding to the majority of their constituents who clearly understand the health benefit of reducing one's exposure to secondhand smoke."

Secondhand smoke can lead to disease and premature death in nonsmoking adults and children, he said. Tobacco addiction claims the lives of roughly 6,400 Louisianans each year and exposure to secondhand smoke is associated with the deaths of at least 650 Louisianans a year.

Smoking costs Louisiana more than \$1.15 billion in direct medical expenditures annually with an additional \$1.66 billion in lost productivity for a total of \$2.8 billion in direct and indirect medical costs.

The Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Louisiana has posted the Louisiana Smoke-Free Air Act online at www.tobaccofreeliving.org. •