

September 15, 2011

**MAYOR BLOOMBERG, SPEAKER QUINN, DEPUTY MAYOR GIBBS AND HEALTH COMMISSIONER FARLEY ANNOUNCE NUMBER OF CITY SMOKERS HAS HIT AN ALL-TIME LOW AT 14 PERCENT**

*Nearly Half a Million New Yorkers Have Quit Smoking Since 2002*

*100,000 Fewer Smokers in New York from 2009 to 2010 Alone*

*Staten Islanders and Teens City-Wide among the Steepest Declines*

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs and Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas A. Farley today announced that New York City's adult smoking rate has reached an all-time low with only 14 out of 100 New Yorkers still smoking. This marks a decrease in the number of New Yorkers who smoke by 35 percent since 2002, when the Health Department began its efforts to reduce tobacco use. This translates to approximately 450,000 fewer adult smokers in New York City, with some of the steepest declines registered among Staten Islanders and teens city-wide. Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Farley were joined at the Health Department's new Long Island City headquarters for today's announcement by Senator Michael Gianaris, Council Member Gale Brewer and a New Yorker who has successfully quit smoking through the City's efforts.

"Smoking is the leading cause of preventable, premature death in New York City and the nation today and we're proud that a record number of New Yorkers are saving their own lives by quitting," said Mayor Bloomberg. "This decrease will prevent 50,000 premature deaths by the year 2052 and I encourage those who are still smoking to take this opportunity to get help quitting by calling 311 today."

"The fact that the adult smoking rate is the lowest it's been since 2002 means that lives are being saved, our air is cleaner and New Yorkers are healthier," said Council Speaker Christine Quinn. "In the last ten years we've become an increasingly smoke-free city. We've reduced the exposure to secondhand smoke for millions of New Yorkers by passing several measures to strengthen our Smoke Free Air Act, including an amendment last May that made our public parks and beaches smoke-free. This matters because according to experts secondhand smoke causes more cancer deaths than asbestos, benzene, arsenic, and pesticides combined."

"There is no question that addiction to cigarettes is a main source of poor health and premature death," said Senator Michael Gianaris. "It is great to see that the number of smokers in New York is significantly lower than a decade ago thanks to Mayor Bloomberg's aggressive efforts to help New Yorkers lead healthier lives. It is promising to see so many are learning to conquer this bad habit so they can live longer and be more prosperous."

"Our multi-faceted approach is helping New Yorkers quit smoking," said Deputy Mayor Gibbs. "The City's cessation supports – including the 311 Quit-line, hard-hitting public health education campaigns, changes in legislation such as the 2002 Smoke-Free Air Act and excise taxes on cigarettes – have resulted in successful quitters and declines in death rates. We're pleased today to see these multi-pronged efforts paying off."

"We are making historic progress against our City's biggest killer," said Health Commissioner Dr. Farley. "This progress didn't just happen. It is the result of deliberate steps taken by the Mayor and the City Council since 2002. Nevertheless, despite our falling smoking rate and a decline in smoking-related deaths over the last eight years, smoking will kill about 7,000 New Yorkers this year. For me, as Health Commissioner, this is way too many deaths and they are preventable. We will continue to work to lower smoking rates even further. I encourage those who still smoke to keep trying to quit. Calling 311 for help will increase your chances of being successful."

"Today's figures highlight exactly why I actively support anti-smoking education, laws and initiatives in our City – they work," said Council Member Gale A. Brewer. "First and second hand smoke is a health problem for all New Yorkers but especially for families who have children with chronic asthma. New York is the national leader in creating healthy cities and promoting a healthy life style, and I look forward to working toward continued success."

Since 2002, smoking dropped from a high of 22 out of 100 people to the current low of 14 out of 100. From 2009 to 2010, the smoking rate decreased by 11 percent representing 100,000 fewer smokers in that one year alone. This is the largest decline in smoking prevalence since a significant 2002-2003 decline from 22 percent to 19 percent (1,305,000 to 1,167,000 people), immediately following the 2002 passage of New York City's Smoke-Free Air Act and the 2002 New York State cigarette tax increase.

Staten Island, which has long been the borough with high smoking rates, achieved an especially steep decline in smoking between 2009 and 2010, with a drop from 19 to 14 percent. Additionally, some neighborhoods, including Flatbush-Canarsie, Central Harlem and southern Staten Island have now seen a greater than 50 percent decline in adult smoking since 2002.

Smoking among teenagers has also dropped dramatically from 2001 to 2010 with the proportion of public high school students who smoke cut by more than half, from 18 percent to 7 percent. The New York City teen numbers are drastically lower than the national youth numbers, which showed a decline from 29% in 2001 to 20 % in 2009.

Tobacco control legislation and other public health initiatives throughout the last decade have contributed to an increase in New Yorkers' life expectancy by more than a year and a half to 79.4.

Some of the significant changes in tobacco control policy include:

#### **Smoke Free Air Act**

- In the last ten years, Mayor Bloomberg and City Council have reduced the exposure to secondhand smoke for millions of New Yorkers by passing several measures to strengthen the City's Smoke Free Air Act (SFAA). In 2002, the SFAA made virtually all workplaces, including bars and restaurants, smoke-free. In 2009, the SFAA was again expanded to cover hospital entrances and grounds. Most recently in May 2011, our public parks, beaches, and pedestrian plazas became smoke-free.

#### **Hard-hitting Public Health Education Campaigns**

- Since 2006, NYC began airing some of the most hard-hitting anti-smoking public health education campaigns in the country. These have driven tens of thousands of calls to 311 for quit assistance, particularly during the City's free annual Nicotine Patch and Gum Program which enrolls approximately 40,000 smokers each year over the course of 16 days.

#### **Point of Sale Tobacco Warning Signs**

- In 2009, the City's Board of Health passed a regulation requiring that all tobacco retailers in the city post signs displaying the graphic effects of tobacco on the body to warn consumers about the risk of tobacco use. Although the law was overturned in December by the Southern District court, it is currently being appealed to the Second Circuit.

#### **Prohibiting Sale to Minors**

- NYC currently has approximately 10,600 tobacco retailers. Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) licenses cigarette retailers in New York City, and enforces City and State laws that prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors. Additionally, all retail tobacco dealers in New York City must register with the State Department of Taxation and Finance to sell tobacco products in New York City. DCA also runs

one of the best and most comprehensive Youth Tobacco Enforcement and Prevention Programs in the country. This program, which pairs inspectors and undercover minors, inspects essentially every City cigarette retail dealer every year to ensure they do not sell tobacco products to underage kids. The New York City Health Department also works to educate retailers on youth access laws through a grant from New York State. Stores' compliance was at 52 percent when the program formally began in 1998. In fiscal year 2011 DCA did 9659 inspections and compliance had improved to 90 percent.

### **Stopping Illicit Sale of Cigarettes**

- Because keeping cigarette prices high promotes quitting, especially among youth, the City has been at the forefront of efforts to stop the illegal bootlegging of cigarettes on which State and City taxes have not been paid. The City has commenced – lawsuits that have shut down internet cigarette sellers, reservation cigarette sellers, cigarette wholesalers and cigarette shippers, seeking to stop cigarette bootlegging. The City has also worked with Congress to pass federal legislation designed to prohibit the shipment of cigarettes through the mail.

### **Electronic Health Records**

- The use of electronic health records (EHRs) with built in reminder and referral systems has led to an increase in screening and treatment of tobacco use by NYC health care providers. Federal regulation now requires providers participating in the meaningful use EHR program to document smoking status for at least 80 percent of their patients and NYC EHR providers have had a head start on meeting that requirement.

### **New Yorkers interested in quitting smoking can review the following tips to make quitting easier:**

- Prepare yourself. Make a list of your reasons for quitting and plan for situations that may tempt you to smoke.
- Pick a quit date. Get rid of ashtrays and lighters, and all cigarettes.
- Make your home and car smoke-free. It is healthier for others and will help you resist smoking.
- Get support and encouragement. Tell your family, friends, and co-workers that you are quitting and ask for their support.
- Get a quit buddy. Ask a smoker to quit with you, or find someone who has already quit who you can talk to for support.
- Join the "NYC Quits" Facebook page - [facebook.com/nycquits](https://www.facebook.com/nycquits) – an online smoking cessation support network with more than 6,000 fans.
- Find the closest of the 11 New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) public hospitals or six diagnostic and treatment centers that offer smoking cessation programs near you by calling 311 or visiting [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov) and searching nyc quits for help quitting smoking.