

**STATEMENT OF NANCY FLOREEN  
ON INTRODUCTION OF BILL TO BAN SMOKING IN MONTGOMERY  
COUNTY RESTAURANTS  
May 13, 2003**

I'm pleased to join my colleagues on the Council and from the public health community on this important day. This morning we introduced legislation to ban smoking in all Montgomery County restaurants. Smoking is already prohibited in most public places in the County. You can't smoke at the mall. You can't smoke when getting your hair cut. You can't smoke when you buy a car. You can't smoke when you go to the theater. You can't smoke in public restrooms. You can't smoke in offices or banks or libraries. It's long past time to extend that prohibition to restaurants.

This isn't just a matter of convenience, or of aesthetics. It's a measure that's sorely needed to protect the public health.

We're all aware that exposure to second hand smoke causes cancer. It causes heart disease. It induces and worsens asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia. But environmental tobacco smoke also causes low birthweight and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome – SIDS. Roughly 1,000 non-smokers in Montgomery County die every year because they've inhaled smoke from others' cigarettes.

Eliminating smoking in restaurants isn't just good for the public health – it's good for business. Over 60 reputable studies have found that smoke-free restaurant and bar laws have no impact or a positive impact on sales and

employment. A small minority of studies found some negative effects on business from a smoking ban – but every single one of those studies was funded by the tobacco industry. The “sky is falling” rhetoric from the restaurant industry is just that -- rhetoric. We will not be dissuaded by Chicken Little.

The bill we introduced this morning is a simple ban on smoking in restaurants and bars. I also introduced two amendments, and I’m looking forward to hearing public comment on both. One amendment would apply the prohibition to outdoor seating areas adjacent to restaurants. Particularly in the summer, isolating smokers at these outdoor tables can create huge clouds of toxic smoke. I’m eager to hear from residents, businesses and public health experts regarding the merits of prohibiting smoking in these areas as well.

My second amendment would extend the prohibition to bars and restaurants located in private clubs. Members of the public attend functions at such clubs, and I recognize the dangers to their health from passive smoking. I invite comments from all those affected on this issue.

California, New York, Delaware and Maine, among other states, have banned smoking in restaurants and bars. The Connecticut legislature just passed similar legislation, which the Governor has promised to sign. The cities of New York, Boston, Los Angeles and San Francisco, among others, have followed suit. Residents in Montgomery County deserve no less. It's time to prohibit smoking in our restaurants and clean up the air for all of us.