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**STUDY SHOWS SMOKEFREE LAW WILL NOT SNUFF TOURISM BUSINESS
35% OF CHARLESTON VISITORS SAY POLICY MAKES RETURNING LIKELY**

CHARLESTON, SC – Organizers of the Smokefree Lowcountry campaign today released findings from a study of visitors to the city, which assessed their opinions about a law that would prohibit smoking in all city workplaces and enclosed public spaces.

The survey found that a smoke-free ordinance is unlikely to have a negative impact on business, as opponents of the measure have suggested. Rather, half of those surveyed said their decision to return to Charleston would be unaffected by a smoking policy, and 41% said they would be more likely to return if Charleston went smoke-free. (79% of respondents said a smoking policy has no bearing on their choice of a vacation destination.)

The researchers also found that 78% of visitors said a smoke-free policy would not keep them from patronizing a bar or club. Indeed, 79% said they would be as likely, or more likely, to go to a bar or club that is smoke-free.

The interviews were conducted with individuals visiting Charleston from March 31 through April 2, 2006, which is considered the first weekend of Charleston's busiest tourism season. A total of 409 respondents were chosen randomly and interviewed by students in the Health Promotions class of the College of Charleston. That sampling was considered statistically reliable.

Additional findings:

- 87% of those traveling with children were more likely to choose a smoke-free restaurant.
- Women visitors were more likely to seek limits on secondhand smoke exposure
- Visitors in their 20s, and those over the age of 50, were more likely to see smoking as a serious hazard and less likely to want it permitted in bars and restaurants.
- Even among smokers, smoke-free rules have little bearing; only 9% of smokers surveyed said they will eat only in a restaurant where smoking is allowed.

The sampling was comprised as follows: 23% were first-time visitors to the area; 31% had visited two or three times, and almost half had visited four or more times. Of the sample, 25% were from South Carolina, 17% from North Carolina and 12% from Virginia; the remaining visitors were from Florida, Virginia, New York and Tennessee.

In terms of age, 10% were in their 20s, 25% in their 30s, 26% in their 40s, 25% in their 50s and 14% were aged 60-plus.

Just under one-fifth of respondents – or 19% - were smokers.

The poll was released by organizers of Smokefree Lowcountry, a public awareness campaign designed to help voters understand the effect of second hand smoke on workers and others. The group's objective is to help pass an ordinance in the City of Charleston prohibiting smoking from indoor public places.

“Businesses will often claim that a smoke-free policy will hurt their bottom line, especially in a tourism-driven economy like Charleston's,” said Regina Creech, a local advocate. “But by going directly to the visitors, and asking their opinions, we found there is no merit in that argument. A smoke-free ordinance will not keep visitors away – not even smokers.”

The Smokefree Lowcountry campaign kicked off in February with the release of a voter poll, which found that Charleston residents are more likely to visit restaurants and bars if a smoke-free law is enacted. Nearly 90% of those surveyed would go out to restaurants and bars either about as often, or more frequently, than they do now if Charleston passes a smoke free ordinance. (63% report about the same frequency; 24% expect to go out more often).

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