

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPORT OF
MAINE STATE EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES REGARDING NO SMOKING AREAS:
A REPORT ON A SURVEY TAKEN OCTOBER, 1973

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM:

During the regular session of the 106th Maine Legislature, three separate legislative documents were presented which dealt with designating certain areas in public buildings as non-smoking areas. One of these pieces of legislation, sponsored by the Maine Inter-agency Council on Smoking and Health, which in turn represents a variety of agencies concerned with the relationship between health and smoking, would have clarified the responsibility of the Bureau of Public Administration in the Department of Finance and Administration to designate certain areas of State-owned or leased buildings as non-smoking areas. During the committee hearing and upon further exploration of the legal issues involved, it was determined that the Bureau of Public Improvements already had the authority to make such a designation. Furthermore, many felt that the most appropriate mechanism to facilitate such designations would be an Executive Order by Governor Curtis requesting that such designations be made. With this in mind, a delegation consisting of Mr. George Nilson, The Executive Director of the Maine Tuberculosis and Health Association, Mr. Marshall Burke, the Assistant Director of that Association, and Dr. Peter Leadley, Director of Health in the Department of Health and Welfare, discussed the prospect of such an executive order with Governor Curtis. The Governor requested additional information about the attitudes and desires of State employees in this area. Therefore, the Maine Tuberculosis and Health Association and the State

Bureau of Health sought and obtained cooperation of the Executive Office staff and the Maine State Employees Association to conduct a survey of the State employees to further define their opinions and attitudes in this area. These four authorities assisted in designing the questionnaire to be distributed among State employees, and the following represents a report of the survey conducted.

METHODOLOGY:

The four authorities involved assisted in the preparation of the questionnaire, a sample of which is attached (See Appendix A). The questions in the questionnaire were based on the personal knowledge and experiences of the several people involved, and it did not conform to any previously used mechanism or surveys that had been pre-tested in other areas. It was designed simply to give a rough but reasonably accurate estimate of opinions in this area. The State Treasurer's Office agreed to assist in distribution of the questionnaire with State paychecks with the assistance of clerical personnel from the Maine TB and Health Association and the Maine Bureau of Health during a single week in mid October. The questionnaires were distributed to all employees who receive their paychecks on Wednesday (those employees in the Augusta and other central office complexes) and on Thursday (those employees in the State Institutions). The paychecks received on Friday are those which go only to the highway road crews and because of the outdoor nature of their work, it was felt they need not be contacted about this particular area

of concern. Recipients of the memorandum and questionnaire were instructed to return the completed forms in inter-office mail to the Bureau of Health, Central Office. Results were tabulated by clerical staff of the Bureau of Health and the Maine TB and Health Association with the assistance of volunteer students. Because of the extra work load involved with tabulation, it was necessary to employ several college students on a project basis during the Christmas Holiday recess to complete the tabulation. The tabulation was done entirely by hand and for that reason no correlations were made between the various data elements. The responses were tabulated by Department in order to assure that every Department, had, in fact, received the questionnaire and the employees in that area were given the opportunity to respond if they wished to do so. With the recent State reorganization efforts, the present location of certain agencies in State Government is to some extent vague and, for that reason, it was occasionally necessary to use some judgement in deciding which questionnaires belonged with which department. The State Planning Office outline of the organization of State Government was used as a guide for grouping responses into departments for tabulation purposes.

The statistical analysis and initial interpretation of the data collected was performed by the Central Office of the Bureau of Health. This report document has been reviewed by the four agencies involved with distributing the questionnaire and the recommendations contained herein represent a concensus of the opinion of the Directors of these four authorities.

RESULTS:

a. Response rate: Table I represents and demonstrates the response rate by Department to the questionnaire showing both numbers of respondents and numbers of employees according to State Treasurer's Office as having received the questionnaire in each department. The total response rate for the approximately 10,000 questionnaires that were distributed is also shown. The Executive Department includes both the agencies listed as being part of the Office of the Governor on the State Planning Office organizational chart and also the State Planning Office and the Executive Law Enforcement Planning Agency. Small agencies or offices were identified separately when they were identified on the State Planning Office organization chart as being individual agencies and also when respondents identified themselves as being part of that particular agency. The several constitutional offices were tabulated separately because all respondents from these offices clearly indicated which of the several offices they were affiliated with. It was apparent from reviewing the questionnaires that many State employees are not yet accustomed to referring to themselves as being affiliated with several recently created departments. In all cases, employees who indicated they were part of the smaller administrative unit were tabulated with responses from the entire department. The figures for the Department of Mental Health and Corrections includes the response from those institutions that are administered by the department. The figures for the Department of Transportation do not include the highway road crews as was mentioned above. A number of very small agencies were grouped together. An agency

was so grouped if it had not been assigned independent status by the State Planning Office as illustrated by the organizational chart included in the Document State of Maine, Governmental Reorganization distributed on December 26, 1973.

b. Attitudes of the rights regarding the non-smoker: Table II shows the agreement rate by Department with the first question on the questionnaire relating to employees opinions about the basic concept of rights of the non-smoker.

c. A sign preference: A total of 3,965 respondents (97.2% of the total response) indicated a preference as to wording of a sign used to designate an areas as a no smoking area. Table III indicates the number of persons preferring each type of sign and the percentages of the total number responding to this question that each category represents.

d. Opinions regarding designation of certain areas: The employees were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with designating certain kinds of areas as no smoking areas with an appropriate sign. Table IV lists the responses by type of area showing the percentage of the total number of respondents agreeing or disagreeing and the total number of respondents received regarding each area. An examination of the raw data by department suggests that the employees of the separate departments quite closely agree with these overall statistics for the entire group of respondents and separate department breakdowns are not presented. This information, has, however, been preserved for examination if desired.

e. Smoking behavior: Employees were asked to indicate whether or not they currently consider themselves to be a "smoker".

No further attempt was made to define what was meant by smoking, but employees were asked to indicate what form of tobacco they used if they did smoke. A total of 3,896 employees responded to this question and of this group, 1,586 (40.7%) indicated they currently regarded themselves as "smoker", while 2,310 (59.3%) responded "no" to this question. Of the total number of respondents, 97% responded to this question. Of those who indicated that they did smoke, 1,160 (68.6%) indicated they smoked cigarettes, 312 (18.5%) indicated they smoked a pipe and 213 (12.6%) indicated they smoked cigars. Total number of responses in this area was 1,685 slightly greater than the total number of respondents who indicated they were smokers. No effort was made to tabulate persons who responded in more than one category, but questionnaires were noted that had dual responses and this is felt to explain this apparent difference.

f. Opinions regarding own working area: The sixth question on the questionnaire asked employees to indicate whether or not they would be in favor of designating their own individual work areas as a non-smoking area if all other employees in the area agreed. A total of 3,759 employees responded to this question representing 93.5% of the respondents. Of this group, 2,733 (72.7%) indicated they would be in favor of such a designation while 1,026 (27.3%) indicated they would not be in favor of so designating their individual work area.

g. Comments and interpretation: As was mentioned above, the department-specific return rate was calculated in order to determine that employees in every department had an opportunity to respond to the questionnaire. The surveyors feel that it would be very unwise to attribute any specific meaning to differences

in departmental response rates. Examination of the questionnaires indicated that many employees may well have been confused as to whether or not the survey applied to them if they did not work in parts of State Office Buildings or other large State buildings. Employees in institutions likewise seemed to be confused about the applicability of the questionnaire to them. Many employees may have chosen not to respond for this sort of reason and since institutional employees or employees who work out of doors represent different proportions of the work force in different departments such variations may well be partially explained on this basis. Departments who have a large proportion of employees that do not work in Augusta may also have shown relatively lower response rates because of the difficulties inherent in using inter-office mail mechanisms from outlying areas. At the time of tabulation, a small number of questionnaires still continued to trickle in to the Bureau of Health offices, and it is possible that certain departments could still be in the process of collecting questionnaires. The efficiency of questionnaire distribution may well have been varied from department to department. Also, the figure for the number of employees was derived solely from the Treasurer's payroll records. The terminology on these records does not totally correspond to the terminology used in the State Planning Office organizational charts and guidelines. Many employees did not write the name of their major department on the questionnaire, but instead referred to smaller administrative units, some of which have similar names in different departments. It is, therefore, possible that certain tabulation errors were made.

Of course, re-examination of the return rates by departments does suggest that those departments that have large field staffs located outside Augusta and those departments who have a large employee work force that is frequently out of doors tended to have lower response rates. We, therefore, suspect that these factors were quite important in determining whether or not employees responded.

The 41% response rate that was observed is regarded as quite good by the surveyors. There were no particular rewards associated with responding in either direction that could be clearly identified. The surveyors would predict that those persons who feel strongly about the matter would tend to respond more frequently. As is noted below, a large number of employees took the time to write comments on their questionnaires. A small number of these comments related to a perceived bias by the employee in the way the questionnaire was structured. The bias was seen as favoring both smokers and non-smokers in equal numbers by those who commented about a potential bias. Since the questionnaire was designed in an attempt to answer a specific question that related to designation of certain areas as non-smoking areas, it could well be interpreted by some as being biased in favor of non-smokers.

The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that non-smokers do have certain rights to breath smoke free air. It should be emphasized that no attempt was made to define or characterize this "right" in any further way, although the large percentage of employees agreeing with this statement would suggest that the attitude is a relatively firm one and held by a

majority of state employees. Of the total number of State employees surveyed, 3,477/9,949 specifically indicated agreement with this statement. This represents 34.9% of the State employees surveyed, including those who did not respond at all. This is opposed to 243/9,949 who specifically responded and disagreed with the statement. This represents 2.4% of the total number of state employees surveyed. These figures are taken as a strong indication of the fact that a majority of state employees agree with this statement.

A majority of state employees who indicated a sign preference favor a sign which read "In Consideration of Others, Please Do Not Smoke Here". No other wording came close to this wording in the tally. Furthermore, the 6% response to "other" would suggest that most of the reasonable alternatives were suggested in the questionnaire. Further examination of the specific notations made under the "other" section would suggest that approximately equal number favored a sign which was even more strongly worded than the choices presented on the questionnaire and along with an equal number who preferred a less strongly worded sign or no sign at all. The 2,023 persons who indicated a preference for the most popular sign represented 49.6% of the total number of respondents or 20.4% of the state employees surveyed. An examination of the department-specific results by type of sign showed that the most popular sign was also the most popular in each specific department.

The data regarding attitudes concerning the designation of certain kinds of areas as no smoking areas is of some interest. A clear majority of respondents were in favor of designating the

conference rooms, a section of the cafeteria and/or other eating areas, and a section of large public waiting areas where space permits as no smoking areas. Likewise, a clear majority of respondents disagreed with designating employee lounges and all public waiting areas as no smoking areas. Toilet areas showed no clear differential of opinion.

We were pleased to note that by selecting different areas we were able to elicit a differential response. We would interpret this as meaning that state employees favor designating areas such as conference rooms, and large public waiting areas where people were required to be by factors external to their own control as areas where non smokers should be in some way protected from smoke laden air. On the other hand, areas such as lounges, the use of which is voluntary, are areas where smoking is still regarded as tolerable behavior.

It is of interest, and not surprising to note, that 59% of state employees now consider themselves to be non-smokers. A variety of other sources have suggested that recently the percentage of non-smoking adults in the population is well over the 50% mark, and this data would be consistent with these results and would also corroborate them. It is also of interest to note that 40% of the respondents were smokers and yet apparently a sizeable proportion of the smokers agreed that non-smokers have certain rights to smoke-free air. The percentages of the respondents favoring designating a section of the cafeteria and a section of large public waiting areas as non-smoking areas would also suggest that a significant proportion of the smokers who responded also felt that these areas should be designated as no smoking areas. It is also of

interest to note that the percentage who felt that conference rooms should be designated as non-smoking areas was exactly the same as the percentage of non-smokers in the respondent population. Because of the fact that the information was not tabulated or processed mechanically, correlations such as the proportion of smoking respondents who felt that conference rooms should be designated as non-smoking areas were not made.

The comments that many respondents made were reviewed. Many comments related to personal problems that the respondents had relative to smoking, and one of the most common of these specific complaints related to discomfort and lack of ability to function in conferences and meetings held in poorly ventilated rooms where a large number of people smoked. A number of persons also specifically suggested that meetings where smoking was prohibited be periodically interrupted to allow smokers to take a cigarette break. Several of those who suggested this solution were smokers.

The information on types of tobacco was generated specifically to establish certain base lines so that in the future, if advisable, alterations in smoking behavior might be assessed. A significant proportion of health education resources in the state are directed toward influencing smoking behavior.

The great majority of respondents (72.7%) indicated that they would agree with designating their work area as non-smoking area if all other employees agreed. Again, the large percentage in this group would suggest that no less than a quarter of the smokers who responded also would agree to such a designation. This question was probably the one which elicited the most

specific comments on the questionnaires. A large number of respondents chose to comment that they felt only a majority vote of the occupants of the work area should be necessary to prohibit smoking in the area. Another sizeable group commented that they would agree to go along with such a designation provided that a smoking area was provided somewhere else. A total of 3,759 persons responded to this question. This represented 93.5% of the total number of respondents.

Comments Made on Questionnaires: Approximately 300 employees chose to make detailed comments on the questionnaires. These were over and above statements which simply attempted to clarify their response to one of the questions, or which indicated an alternate wording for the sign as asked in question No. 3. The vast majority of these comments reflected personal views on the subject covered by the questionnaire and most of these appeared to be favorable to the concept of some mechanism protecting non-smokers from the smoke of others. As was mentioned above, a large number of employees chose to relate personal experiences and individual gripes that they experienced in their individual situation relating to the smoking behavior of others. A very large number stated that they felt the questionnaire was approaching the whole question from the wrong point of view and that the solution should be effected by setting aside separate smoking rooms for those who wish to smoke. In some cases, they commented that all other areas should be regarded as non-smoking areas although this was

not specifically said in most comments that related to this issue. A small number of employees mentioned specific medical problems that they had which they felt had been aggravated by the smoking behavior of others on the job. A smaller number made comments on various mechanisms of implementation of no smoking areas. A small number chose to make detailed suggestions about the wording of a sign which might designate no smoking areas and a small number commented specifically on the wording of the questionnaire. Seven employees specifically commented that they felt the questionnaire was a waste of time. Two employees specifically commented that they felt that smoking was their right and they objected to any effort to curtail this activity. A small number of comments relating to banning smoking in state vehicles and several related specific experiences they had had in motor vehicles during which they experienced significant discomfort because of the smoking behavior of others.

A number of employees questioned where the employees lounges alluded to in the questionnaire were located and several chose to comment that they had never seen one. At least 25 employees specifically commented that they felt that the buildings were inadequately ventilated. Four employees specifically felt that smoking in their specific work area represented or may represent a fire hazard.. Five employees specifically commented that they were presently smokers but favored designating certain areas as no smoking areas because they presently wished to stop smoking and felt that such designation would help them in stopping or cutting down.

As was indicated above, approximately equal numbers of employees commented that the questionnaire was slanted either in favor of smokers or in favor of non-smokers.

A moderate number of comments related to concerns about amount of productive work time that might be lost if employees were required to leave their individual work areas whenever they wished to smoke.

As was indicated above, a moderate number of comments related to the fact that the employee felt that only a majority of the workers in a given area should be able to decide whether or not smoking might be allowed in that area. A small number of workers commented on the unenforceability of any prohibition on the smoking in certain areas.

Several workers went to the extent of writing separate letters which they attached to the questionnaires addressed to the surveyors. The majority of these letters favored the concept of protecting non smokers in some way from exposure to the cigarette smoke of smokers. Needless to say, these letters represented strong expression of opinion, and they are kept on file in the Central Office of the Bureau of Health as examples of the intensity of certain individual opinions relating to this subject.

The questionnaire specifically requests that employees identify themselves should they choose to make comments and virtually every employee who did comment regardless of which side of the fence he was on, did also identify himself and by doing so indicated that he would be happy to clarify his comment.

Suggestions: We interpret the results of this survey to indicate that state employees do feel quite strongly about the issue of the rights of the non-smoker in our society. In general, they feel that the non-smoker does have a right to breath smoke-free air although the intensity of this belief is obviously quite variable. The survey does suggest that designating certain areas, specifically the conference rooms, a section of the cafeteria and sections of large waiting areas as non-smoking areas with an appropriately worded sign would be acceptable. Furthermore, a sign reading "In Consideration of Others, Please Do Not Smoke Here" was selected as being the most appropriate one.

1. The surveyors would, therefore, like to suggest that the results of this inquiry be brought to the attention of the department heads and that they in concert with the Governor decide on the advisability of designating these areas as no smoking areas with an appropriate sign. It is further suggested that should such an Executive Order be issued, state employees be requested to comply with the designation. We do not feel that any further or more punitive form of enforcement is appropriate at this time. We do feel that evaluation of the effect through observation would be advisable.

2. It is also suggested that individual supervisors be encouraged through administrative channels to poll employees in their respective areas about their desires regarding smoking. When feasible, it is suggested that individual work areas be designated as non smoking areas with an appropriate sign if all employees in the area agree with the designation

and if a smoking area is conveniently available to those who might wish to smoke during work hours.

3. It is suggested that the results of this poll be made available to the press and be otherwise regarded as a public document for the specific purpose of disseminating information about the results of the survey so that state employees and other individuals in work situations can make individual decisions about smoking behavior with a full knowledge of the attitudes of public servants. However, we feel that individual responses should be maintained as confidential communication which could be made available only to individual supervisors or department heads should they wish to determine attitudes about smoking behavior in their respective units.

It is specifically suggested that the Institutional Health Program, Department of Health and Welfare, and the Occupational Health and Safety Program in the Department of Manpower Affairs be requested to investigate those specific comments which related to the existence of fire hazards in certain state government work situations.

Table I

Smoking Survey, 1973

Response Rate by Department of
Maine State Government

<u>Department</u>	<u>Number of Returns</u>	<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Response Rate (as Per-cent)</u>
Executive	69	84	82%
Public Safety	28	525	5.3%
Military, Civil Defense and Veterans Affairs	76	157	48%
Personnel	23	29	79%
Indian Affairs	6	29	20%
Human Rights Commission	2	5	40%
Legislative Offices	9	29	31%
Constitutional Offices Attorney General	38	54	70%
Treasurer	7	11	64%
Secretary of State	126	302	42%
Agriculture	63	295	21%
Business Regulation	41	71	58%
Commerce and Industry	15	45	33%
Conservation	100	238	42%
Education and Cultural Services (including schools)	322	827	39%
Environmental Protection	44	71	62%
Finance and Administration	338	899	38%
Health and Welfare	821	1276	64%

<u>Department</u>	<u>Number of Returns</u>	<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Response Rate (as Per-cent)</u>
Inland Fisheries and Game	66	316	21%
Manpower Affairs	399	620	64%
Marine Resources	49	117	42%
Mental Health and Corrections (including Insitutions)	715	2719	26%
Transportation (not including highway crews)	621	1068	58%
Miscellaneous Small Agencies*	100	162	62%
TOTAL	<u>4078</u>	<u>9949</u>	<u>41.0%</u>

* Note: This category includes: Audit, Maine State Retirement, Board of Barbers, Board of Cosmetology, Industrial Accident Commission, Public Utilities Commission, Pesticides Control Board, Bureau of Watercraft, Board of Registration in Nursing and the Sardine Council.

Table II

Smoking Survey, 1973

Attitude Regarding Rights
of Non-smoker by Department
as Measured by Survey Questionnaire

<u>Department</u>	<u>Number in Agreement</u>	<u>Number Disagreeing</u>	<u>Number With No Opinion</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents in Agreement</u>
Executive	66	1	2	96%
Public Safety	21	1	6	75%
Military, Civil Defense and Veterans Services	65	6	5	86%
Personnel	15	2	6	65%
Indian Affairs	6	0	0	100%
Human Rights Commission	2	0	0	100%
Legislative Offices	8	0	1	89%
Constitutional Offices Attorney General	35	1	2	92%
Treasurer	7	0	0	100%
Secretary of State	99	8	19	79%
Agriculture	56	2	5	89%
Business Regulation	36	0	5	88%
Commerce and Industry	12	3	0	80%
Conservation	93	2	5	93%
Education and Cultural Services	292	12	18	91%
Environmental Protection	40	1	3	91%
Finance and Administration	284	17	37	84%
Health and Welfare	710	57	54	87%
Inland Fisheries and Game	55	6	5	83%
Manpower Affairs	382	29	42	82%

<u>Department</u>	<u>Number in Agreement</u>	<u>Number Disagreeing</u>	<u>Number With No Opinion</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents in Agreement</u>
Marine Resources	47	0	2	96%
Mental Health and Corrections	629	42	44	88%
Transportation	538	54	29	87%
Miscellaneous Small Agencies	87	1	12	87%
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<u>TOTAL</u>	3477	243	300	
Per cent of Total	86%	6%	7%	

Table III
 Smoking Survey 1973
 Sign Wording Preference
 as Expressed on Questionnaire

<u>Wording</u>	<u>Number Preferring</u>	<u>Per cent of Total</u>
"Smoking Prohibited"	721	11.3%
"No Smoking"	552	13.9%
"Please Do Not Smoke"	432	10.9%
"In Consideration of Others, Please Do Not Smoke Here"	2023	51.0%
"Other"	237	6.0%
TOTAL	3965	100%

Table IV
Smoking Survey 1973

Attitudes Regarding Potential
Designation of Certain Areas
as No-smoking Areas

<u>Area</u>	<u>Percent Agreeing</u>	<u>Percent Disagreeing</u>	<u>Percent with No Opinion</u>	<u>Number of Employees Indicating Attitude</u>
Conference Rooms	59.3%	29.0%	11.7%	3610
Toilet Rooms	36.7%	44.3%	19.0%	3416
Employee Lounges	31.2%	53.3%	15.5%	3413
Section of the Cafeteria and/or Other Eating Areas	73.2%	17.7%	9.1%	3641
A Section of Large Public Waiting Areas Where Space Permits	72.4%	17.3%	10.2%	3537
All Public Waiting Areas	32.7%	52.5%	15.0%	3406

TO: State Employees, State of Maine

FROM: Executive Office
Bureau of Health, Department of Health and Welfare
Maine Tuberculosis and Health Association
Maine State Employees Association

SUBJECT: Your Opinions on Non-Smoking Areas

Recent medical evidence released by the Surgeon General of the U. S. Public Health Service shows that non-smokers are or can be exposed to certain health hazards as a result of exposure to tobacco smoke in their environment. Furthermore, a number of Civil Rights groups have asserted that non-smokers have the right to breathe smoke-free air and that smokers have a right to enjoy their habit. We are interested in your feelings in these areas as a guide to making policy decisions about a request that persons using certain parts of State-owned buildings be asked not to smoke in these particular areas. Would you please answer the questions below and return this questionnaire in batches in inter-office mail to the Central Office, Bureau of Health, Department of Health and Welfare. You need not identify yourself in any way; however, if you would like to make any supplemental comments, we would ask you to identify yourself so we may contact you for clarifications.

Thank you.

1. I agree that the non-smoker has a certain right to breathe smoke-free air in public places.

Agree _____ Disagree _____ No Opinion _____

2. My Department is: _____

3. If any public area in State-owned buildings were to be set aside for the use of non-smokers, I would favor a sign reading:

(Check One Only)

1. Smoking Prohibited _____
2. No Smoking _____
3. Please Do Not Smoke _____
4. In Consideration of Others,
Please Do Not Smoke Here _____
5. Other _____

4. I agree that the following areas should be strongly considered for designation as no-smoking areas with an appropriate sign:

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
a. Conference Rooms	_____	_____	_____
b. Toilet Rooms	_____	_____	_____
c. Employee Lounges	_____	_____	_____
d. A section of the Cafeteria and/or Other Eating Areas	_____	_____	_____
e. A section of large public waiting areas where space permits	_____	_____	_____
f. All public waiting areas	_____	_____	_____

YES

NO

5. Are you currently a smoker?

If "Yes", do you smoke:

Cigarettes

A pipe

Cigars

6. Would you be in favor of designating your work area as a non-smoking area if all other employees in the area agreed?
