

2009 Advocacy Victories

1. Secured \$30 million for diesel reduction projects

Respiratory Health Association helped secure \$31.1 million in federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Improvement funding (CMAQ) to clean up diesel-powered trucks, buses, construction equipment and locomotives in the Chicago metropolitan area in 2010 and 2011. The local CMAQ committee also adopted a plan to set aside an additional \$10 million in 2012 and 2013 funding to clean up CTA's diesel bus fleet with advanced pollution controls if future funding becomes available. This funding will reduce diesel pollution, which triggers hundreds of asthma and heart attacks in Chicago each year.

2. Advocacy days unite lung health partners

Annual Lung Health Advocacy Days in both Washington D. C. and Springfield are crucial to informing our legislators about lung health. In 2009, patient advocates from more than 20 organizations across the state and across the country met with lawmakers to discuss their action agendas and goals for lung health research and education programs. Each year, these events give legislators access to an independent lung health community that is vibrant and dedicated to protecting and promoting lung health and supporting treatment and research for lung diseases.

3. Protecting smoke-free Illinois

January 1, 2010 marks the second anniversary of Illinois' historic smoke-free law, one of the strongest such laws in the country. In 2009, we defeated several attempts to weaken the law, and we will continue to closely monitor new legislation and amendments so that we can uphold this crucial lung health victory for Illinois. This legislation protects Illinois residents from the dangers of secondhand smoke by banning smoking in all public places, including bars and restaurants.

4. Lawsuit aims to clean up power plants

As a result of the mounting pressure, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan filed a lawsuit against Midwest Generation for violation of the Clean Air Act. News about the lawsuit appeared in more than a dozen news sources, including *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* and Associated Press. Chicago's two coal plants, the Fisk plant in Pilsen and the Crawford plant in Little Village, are responsible for 41 premature deaths, 550 emergency room visits and 2,800 asthma attacks annually.

5. New law permits FDA regulation of tobacco

Respiratory Health Association and our volunteer advocates worked to pass the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which mandates larger health warnings on tobacco packages and detailed ingredient disclosure, restricts youth access to tobacco and marketing, requires tobacco companies to fund FDA activities and empowers the FDA to require changes in tobacco products (such as the removal or reduction of harmful ingredients). In recognition of our long-time efforts in tobacco control, Joel Africk (Respiratory Health Association president and chief executive officer) was invited to attend the signing ceremony at the White House. This law will save thousands of lives and millions of dollars in healthcare costs.

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6. Illinois leads Midwest in green construction policy

In 2009, both Cook County and Illinois adopted green construction policies. Cook County's ordinance is the first of its kind in the Midwest, and it requires all contractors working on Cook County government projects to use cleaner fuels and pollution controls on their diesel-powered vehicles and equipment. Similarly, Gov. Quinn signed an executive order that requires all state-funded road construction projects in non-attainment areas to use clean construction practices. These regulations will protect public health and improve air quality for employees and residents living in close proximity to construction projects.

7. Statewide survey to include questions on COPD

Working with policy leaders in Springfield, we secured the inclusion of questions about chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) on the CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, the state's health survey. The survey will gather critical information about COPD in Illinois, and it will provide lawmakers, researchers and public health professionals a more accurate portrayal of the disease, its impacts and how to address it. The inclusion of these questions is critical for recognizing COPD as a major public health threat; the fourth leading cause of death in the United States.

8. Advocates promote better coverage for people living with COPD

Respiratory Health Association hand-delivered more than 200 letters to the White House to urge top officials to provide better care for people living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Written by participants at our annual COPD educational conference the letters called for Health and Human Services to: increase programming for COPD; improve coverage of oxygen therapy; and improve coverage of pulmonary rehab. Improved coverage will not only reduce the healthcare costs for people who have COPD and reiterate the need for COPD recognition and diagnosis.

9. New laws protect families from radon exposure

Respiratory Health Association helped pass three new state laws promoting radon awareness. The laws set standards for radon detection devices, mandate school districts to test their buildings every five years, and ensures that sellers of certain properties disclose radon levels to buyers. The laws also create a state Radon-Resistant Building Codes Task Force to make recommendations concerning the adoption of radon-friendly building codes. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, and this legislation furthers protects Illinois residents from exposure.

10. Strengthened anti-idling laws

Respiratory Health Association helped pass a law this year that strengthens Illinois' diesel no-idling law by increasing the fines for violations. Respiratory Health Association also helped pass a 3-minute idling limit ordinance in the city of Chicago. This ordinance is one of the most aggressive city idling limits in the Midwest. Reducing the amount of diesel pollution will reduce the occurrence of asthma attacks, lung cancer deaths, heat attacks and incidences of chronic bronchitis.