



Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation Day at the Capitol is a Huge Success

What do you call a group of people in pink shirts chanting “Keep Lungs Loud” on the Capitol steps? The Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation coalition!

The coalition hosted its annual Day at the Capitol on March 5. Around 230 public health advocates, students, healthcare professionals and others gathered to call on their legislators to support HF 2177/SF 2123 to end the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco products in MN. ANSR played a major role in planning the event.

Advocates started at the History Center to prepare for an afternoon of lobbying, then walked to the Capitol to put that training into action. The coalition connected with nearly every legislative office by the end of the day. Advocates attended over 100 meetings and left drop-offs for legislators who they couldn’t meet face-to-face.



*The coalition gathered on the Capitol steps, cheering “Keep Lungs Loud!”
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ANSR brought 14 students from its Student Action Team to the event. For many, it was either their first time at the Capitol or first time speaking to their lawmakers. The students talked to their legislators about commercial tobacco use and vaping among their peers and left feeling empowered.

In a miracle of accidental timing, the event overlapped with the House Health Finance and Policy Committee hearing on the flavors bill. The coalition fielded a strong lineup of testifiers. After the testimony, ANSR’s Emily Anderson joined Representative Ethan Cha, the bill’s lead author, to help answer questions from legislators. Visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjdgMsaEmGc to watch the hearing (starts at 1:00:17).

As this legislative session moves forward, coalition partners will continue to show up and speak up at the Capitol. Because every year we delay thousands of young people become addicted to nicotine, we can’t wait. The legislature can and should vote to put Minnesotans’ health above industry profits by ending the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco products.



Legislative Update

Flavors Bill Advances at Legislature

HF 2177, the bill to end the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco products, made progress in the House this session. It passed in the House Health Finance and Policy committee and was heard in the House Commerce Finance and Policy committee this month. The MSFG coalition will continue to reach out to House and Senate leadership to ask them to prioritize the passage of this bill this session.

House Commerce also heard and approved HF 4251, the bill to prohibit the sale of flavored cannabis that is burned, inhaled or vaporized, and referred it to the House Health Committee.

Boisclair Corporation Goes Smoke Free

Boisclair Corporation will be clearing the air in their properties this spring. Their new smoke-free policy will protect 16 buildings and 1,120 units from harmful secondhand smoke. Boisclair has been providing “housing for everyone” including affordable, student, market rate and senior communities since 1974 in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Company leaders hope the new smoke-free policy will help create healthier, cleaner and safer environments for residents, guests and staff. Live Smoke Free is supporting Boisclair Corporation staff and residents through the transition thanks to funding from the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership of Hennepin County and Bloomington-Edina-Richfield.

Live Smoke Free applauds Boisclair Corporation for taking this step. For assistance with adopting a smoke-free housing policy, contact Live Smoke Free at 651-646-3005 or info@mnsnsmokefreehousing.org.



Springing Into Outreach Events Season

Cold weather doesn't put a stop to ANSR's community outreach efforts! We've attended three tabling events over the past few months and are gearing up for many more this summer.

ANSR staff and partners tabled at the BIPOC Expo in Minneapolis in February and ran into Senate President Bobby Joe Champion, lead author of SF 2123, the bill to end the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco products in Minnesota.



From left: Sena Geleto, NorthPoint Health and Wellness; Ubah Omar, ANSR; Senator Bobby Joe Champion; Curtis Neff, ANSR.

ANSR teamed up with our partners at NorthPoint Health and Wellness to represent the Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation coalition at the Community Connections Conference in Minneapolis the following weekend. The group educated attendees about price discounting policy and the statewide flavors bill.

Staff and two students from ANSR's Student Action Team tabled at the Outfront Youth Summit in March, connecting with over 450 LGBTQ+ high school students from across the state.

We're looking forward to more community events over the next few months!

ANSR partner Said Ahmed and staff member Curtis Neff at the Community Connections Conference.



ANSR Forms the Ramsey County Student Action Team, Gets to Work

ANSR formed the Ramsey County Student Action Team (SAT) at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year with funding from the Minnesota Department of Health and Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health. The group is made up of 28 dedicated students from Ramsey County high schools.

At monthly meetings throughout the fall, the SAT learned about the harms of commercial tobacco use, tobacco industry targeting, advocacy skills, and more, following ANSR's Tobacco 101 curriculum. Now they are building on their knowledge and skills to advocate for

commercial tobacco and vaping prevention in their local communities. ANSR staff members connect the students with action opportunities that fit their skills, interests, and comfort levels.

Some support ANSR's local policy work by attending and/or testifying at city council meetings. Many are interested in state-level advocacy; fourteen of them attended the Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation Day at the Capitol in March. Others focus on peer-to-peer education. Evidence shows that youth pay close attention to what their older peers have to say, and students enjoy mentoring younger students. One example of this outreach is school presentations. Three SAT students helped present on vaping to a 6th grade health class at Chippewa Middle School.



Student Action Team members prepared for Day at the Capitol at their February 26 meeting.



Posters created by SAT students from RAHS.

Students from Roseville Area High School (RAHS) organized an educational campaign in their building. They wanted to focus on the place where many of their peers vape at school: the bathrooms. The group decided on messaging for three posters and assembled over 250 quit kits, filling them with rubber bands, fidgets, mints, educational palm cards, and other trinkets that students trying to quit vaping could use to distract themselves from nicotine cravings. They organized volunteers to distribute the posters and quit kits in the school's bathrooms for a three weeks. Like good budding public health advocates, they are evaluating the reach and effectiveness of their campaign by using an anonymous survey.

"The students bring passion and their own narratives," says Katie Engman, ANSR program director and one of the SAT group leaders. "Our role is to let them know that their voices count and are critical in addressing the environmental, social justice and health impacts of malicious industry targeting on our community, state, and world."

Youth voices are essential to commercial tobacco prevention advocacy work. Adult decision makers listen to them, and they can have a powerful influence on their peers. The tobacco industry targets their age group with flavors and products that look like school supplies, candy, and more. Their testimony and advocacy is invaluable to our policy efforts. These young leaders are making a huge impact!

Save the Date: 50th Annual ANSR Plant Sale

This year marks 50 years of ANSR plant sale fundraisers. You won't want to miss it!

Honor system sale: May 13-16, 2024

Regular sale: May 17-18, 2024

Location: 1647 Laurel Ave, Saint Paul, MN

Interested in volunteering? Contact jw@ansrmn.org or call 651-646-3005.



CDC to Feature 'Don't Discount My Life' Video

The CDC Office on Smoking and Health requested to use ANSR's Don't Discount My Life video at an upcoming CDC awardee meeting for state commercial tobacco programs. They will be sharing the video as an example of creative messaging using evidence-based best practices. This recognition is a great honor. Scan the QR code or visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGRmGFDvzpA&t=1s to watch.



More Day at the Capitol Photos!



ANSR staff and students met with Rep. Athena Hollins. She kept our bag of e-cigarettes as a show-and-tell for her proposed e-waste bill (HF3566).



The Student Action Team was excited to bring their unique perspectives to their lawmakers and to advocate for their peers!



ANSR staff David Olson-Iverson and Jackie Siewert and partner Gameda Megersa met with Rep. Kaohly Vang Her.

ANSR Donation Form

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Please mail this form with your check to:
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St. Paul, MN 55114-1512

Donor Spotlight: Why I Support ANSR

Gene Nichols



Gene Nichols testified in support of raising the tobacco sales age to 21 in Minneapolis in 2018.

Eugene "Gene" Nichols is a community advocate and is Secretary on the ANSR Board of Directors. He is a member of the Shoreview Human Rights Commission, a board member for Tobacco-Free Alliance and Face to Face, and a member of the American Heart Association's MN State Advisory Committee.

Gene has lost family and friends to smoking-related illness. He is dedicated to advocating for strong commercial tobacco prevention policies that help protect Black Minnesotans from industry targeting and decrease commercial tobacco's harms.

Gene coordinated a SHIP-funded study with the African American Leadership Forum and health departments in Bloomington, Richfield, and Ramsey and Hennepin Counties between 2015 and 2017 to assess the impact of menthol commercial tobacco on African Americans in the Twin Cities. He has shared the study's findings with community members and city councils across the metro to demonstrate the need for comprehensive prevention policies that address and reduce health disparities.

Gene teamed up with ANSR to expand his community outreach and advocacy efforts. He has testified in front of numerous local and state decision makers and continues to speak out in support of ending the sale of menthol and other flavored commercial tobacco products. ANSR's local and statewide policy work would not be the same without Gene's contributions.

"I continue to support the work at ANSR-MN because the organization is relevant still today," he says. "From clean indoor air to restricting the sale of flavors, including menthol policies, this work provides us with the basic human right to health. The grief all of us have felt when our loved ones succumb to the scourge of tobacco use is due entirely to the relentless targeting efforts of the well-funded tobacco industry. Free enterprise should not mean the right to kill. We must insist on protecting our youth in all communities in collaboration with public health."

Price Discounting Moving Forward in Minneapolis

The Minneapolis City Council reintroduced a proposal to prohibit the redemption of coupons for all commercial tobacco products, set a minimum price for cigarettes and smokeless tobacco, increase penalties for violations and close the "sampling loophole" on March 7. A public hearing in the Business, Housing and Zoning Committee is set for April 16. Minneapolis partners, stay tuned for upcoming action alerts!



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For more information, contact ANSR at:

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www.ansrmn.org.

Thank you for all you do for ANSR. Please consider sharing this newsletter with a friend!



New Brighton Caps Tobacco Shop Licenses, Sets Distance Requirements

The New Brighton City Council capped tobacco products shop licenses at four, set a 1,000-foot distance requirement between tobacco retailers and youth-oriented facilities, aligned ordinance language with federal and state minimums and adjusted penalties for violations at their January council meeting. ANSR staff started working with the city in early 2023 to evaluate the impact of commercial tobacco in the city and educate the Council about their policy options.

Several ANSR staff, partners and youth advocates testified at the public hearing. They applauded the Council for limiting the availability of commercial tobacco in their community and encouraged them to go further by limiting all tobacco licenses or restricting flavors, including menthol. The Council voted unanimously to adopt the ordinance, and some council members expressed interest in supporting statewide flavored commercial tobacco work.

Left: Student Action Team member My Linh testified before the New Brighton City Council.



Above: Advocates celebrated after the New Brighton City Council unanimously voted in support of the license capping ordinance.

