

End Notes



Marsha Cathcart

Airline smoking ban clears U.S. Senate

Thanks to the efforts of AARC members, we have now come one step closer to getting some kind of permanent ban on airline smoking passed before the April 1990 deadline!

At press time, *AARC Times* learned that Senator Frank Lautenberg's (D-NJ) bill, which called for a total smoking ban on all domestic flights, passed by an overwhelming margin in the U.S. Senate on September 14. Commenting after the vote, Senator Lautenberg said, "We're closing in on a day when the air will be cleared in all airline cabins in the U.S." Earlier, on August 2, the House of Representatives passed Congressman Dick Durbin's (D-IL) bill to extend the current two-hour ban.

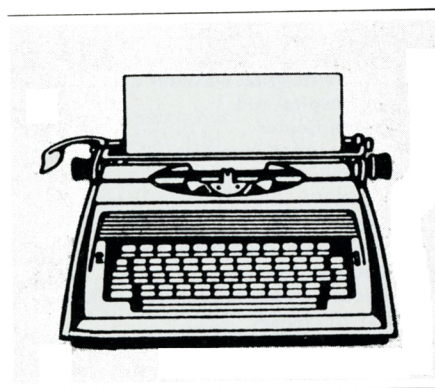
The Senate's bill to ban airline smoking was part of the FY90 transportation appropriations bill of \$27 billion. Senator Lautenberg is chairman of the Transportation Appropriations Committee.

"This is a victory for the majority of airline passengers who don't want to breathe other people's cigarette smoke. It will protect people from the damage caused by passive smoking and improve air quality on all U.S. domestic flights," said Lautenberg.

AARC support a key factor

The AARC has continuously supported the passage of an airline smoking ban since 1987, when AARC members conducted the Association's first nationwide survey of airline passengers. In early 1988, a smoking ban for flights of two hours or less went into effect. In April of this year, AARC members once again conducted a nationwide survey of airline passengers, this time upon the request of Congressman Durbin, who led the fight in the House to extend the ban. (The

current ban will expire in April 1990 unless it is made permanent or extended by congressional mandate.) AARC members polled 27,677 airline passengers at 66 airports in 33 states to document public opinion regarding smoking on airlines. An overwhelming 84% of the people surveyed said they approve of the current ban. Surprisingly, 58.1% of smokers surveyed indicated they approve of the current ban, and 51% said they would favor a permanent ban.



Both Congressman Durbin and Senator Lautenberg used the attitudinal data from the AARC's airline smoking survey to push for further legislation on smoking. "Our survey was recognized by many members of Congress as *the* source of data on airline passengers' attitudes about smoking. It was the only survey of its kind," said Sam Giordano, AARC executive director, upon hearing the news of the bill's passage. "The AARC members should be congratulated for their outstanding efforts to protect respiratory wellness," he added. AARC members' efforts to get this legislation passed did not end with the survey. One week before the Senate was expected to vote on Senator Lautenberg's bill, the AARC Executive Office sent tele-

grams to all its affiliate presidents, delegates, and alternate delegates, urging them to contact their senators immediately. Association leaders responded quickly by sending telegrams to (as well as calling) their respective senators to voice their support for Lautenberg's bill. "The telegrams they sent to their senators made a big difference," said Giordano, remarking on the Senate's overwhelming support of Lautenberg's bill.

Another tough fight ahead

The battle isn't over yet. The differences between the Senate and House bills to ban smoking on airlines must now be resolved by a conference committee made up of legislators from both bodies. Lawmakers and lobbyists agree that the proposed legislation still faces a tough fight because the tobacco industry has already announced it will try to reverse the Senate action there. "We have a positive outlook that the product of the conference committee will be much less extreme than what occurred in the Senate today," said Gary Miller, Tobacco Institute spokesman.

Whatever the outcome, AARC members can take pride in the fact that their all-out efforts to preserve public health have been recognized at the nation's highest levels of government. "Together, as members, we have successfully worked to get this ban passed in both the House and Senate," said Jerome Sullivan, AARC president-elect. "By working hard to push for this type of legislation, AARC members are proving to the public that we are committed to promoting lung health," he added. ●

Marsha Cathcart is associate editor of AARC Times.