



# Passing Policy in Appalachia: A Look Into Smoke-Free Policy Work in Eastern Kentucky

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## Learning Objectives

- As a result of examining this poster, participants will be able to recognize how the history of tobacco in Kentucky has an effect on the work being done currently in regards to smoke-free policy.
- As a result of examining this poster, participants will be able to identify the challenges public health representatives have faced when presenting to local officials to speak on smoke-free policy.
- As a result of examining this poster, participants will be able to detect what local and regional strategies have been successful in getting smoke-free policy passed in Eastern Kentucky.

## Deep Roots

- Starting out as a simple, small farm crop, tobacco was referred to as a mortgage lifter. However, once tobacco evolved into big business favored by politicians and being subsidized by the government, most of the profits go to the corporations.
- Despite many years of data showing that the crop is a long-term loser for the grower, the devotion to growing it remains thoroughly entrenched due to tobacco farms being often "inherited" and the cultural pressure to continue growing being substantial.
- Tobacco has been accepted as a form of celebration for decades. Culturally, it has been accepted to "light up" at events such as weddings, births, etc.
- We are seeing that these "deep roots" have created a stronghold causing sustainability problems within our region as we look at the poor health outcomes amongst our population in relation to tobacco use.

## Barriers and Challenges



During the Covid-19 Pandemic some counties chose to have their fiscal court meetings via the Zoom platform. This image was taken during one of the monthly meetings with the Knott County Fiscal Court.

- Covid-19 Pandemic: During the pandemic, fiscal court meetings were often delayed or canceled making getting the policy passed in a timely manner difficult, once the process was started.
- The Locals: The community and members of the fiscal court were not always quick to "jump on board" the idea of a smoke-free policy because they didn't understand what it was; they thought we were taking away their right to smoke.
- Funding: Our work goes beyond policy, so funding has to be used to pay for so much. There is rarely overhead leftover to accommodate anything extra. We were fortunate to receive additional grant funding to support our efforts in policy work.
- Involvement: We partner with other local agencies and coalitions who are supportive of these policies. However, one of the challenges we have is getting them to be involved in the "boots on the ground" work.
- Fiscal Court: Many of the fiscal court members have regular "9-5" jobs so trying to reach them to meet to discuss policy outside of the regularly scheduled fiscal court meetings can be difficult. They don't understand the issue at hand, so they don't make meeting with us a priority.
- County Jails: The sale of e-cigarette products in jails is a big source of income for them. This causes some hesitation when it comes to policy, because the policy would prohibit the use of the products.

## Partnerships



## The Strategy

- Understanding the Need: The adult smoking rates in our counties are high, higher than the state rate itself. Here are the statistics:

Knott County: 32%   Lee County: 32%   Leslie County: 30%   Letcher County: 30%  
 Owsley County: 31%   Perry County: 29%   Wolfe County: 34%  
 Kentucky: 21.4%   United States: 15.5%

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

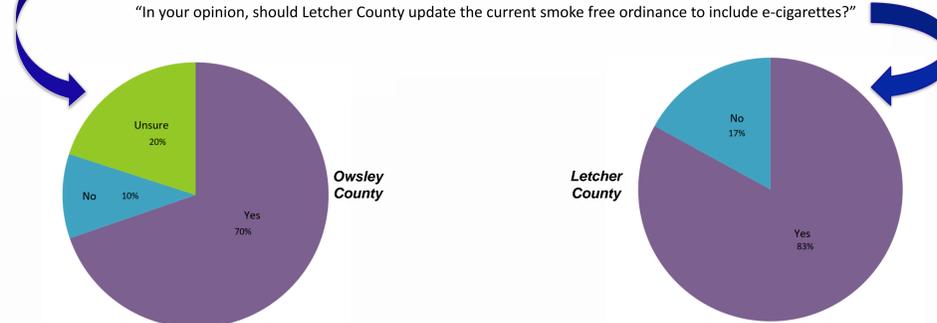
These high smoking rates are due to generational tobacco use. One of our goals with these policies is to encourage people to seek out cessation services. We want to work towards a better health equity in our region in order to better preserve our culture and communities.

- Communication: During our conversations with fiscal court & city council members, we provide education, explain the need, and how policy can benefit that city/county fiscally. We make sure to explain that these policies are "not about the smoker, but the smoke".
- Data Collection: We have conducted surveys in three of our counties (Lee, Letcher, and Owsley). The results of these surveys have shown that there is overwhelming support of a policy, despite there being a lack of knowledge in what secondhand smoke is and its dangerous effects.

✓ The following questions were asked in Letcher and Owsley Counties and the pie charts show the data we received:

"In your opinion, should Owsley County adopt a local law to protect individuals who do not smoke, from the dangers of secondhand smoke and vape aerosol in work and public places?"

"In your opinion, should Letcher County update the current smoke free ordinance to include e-cigarettes?"



## Community

THIS IS WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT

The most important thing is community support! You have to have the backing of your community because if they aren't supportive from the get-go, they will not be compliant once the policy is passed. So, how do you gain community support?

- Education: We attend as many events in that county as possible to hand out educational materials, provide prevention education in schools, and post education to our social media pages.
- Trust ID: We visit every tobacco retailer in our seven county district to provide them with training materials and signage to curb underage sales. This gives us an opportunity to garner support and develop relationships with this population.
- Advertisements: A portion of our funding goes towards advertisements such as billboards, newspapers, and television ads. These advertisements promote policy and cessation services.



Every County and City We Worked With Received the Everette Varney Smoke-free Indoor Air Excellence Award!

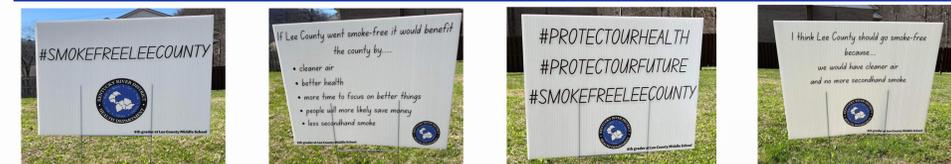


## Policy Got Passed! What's Next?

- Business Kits (pictured below): After a policy is passed we distribute business kits to as many businesses in that county/city as possible. The majority of places are so happy to receive these kits as they are full of policy information, information on how to speak to consumers, and signage for their business.
- Signage: We purchase and give metal signage to the county judge executive and/or mayor for them to place wherever it may be needed.
- Awareness: We post announcements on our social media pages and the county newspapers to share news of the new policy being in place (pictured below).
- Thank You: We place Thank You advertisements in the county newspapers and to our social media thanking the fiscal court/city council for enacting the policy. In Owsley County we had postcards made; students and community members filled them out and they were mailed to the Owsley County Fiscal Court to say thank you for their leadership in this area (post card pictured below).



## Our Ongoing Efforts



- Lee County: We have focused our efforts on advocacy. This includes conducting surveys to gauge the community's knowledge and interest in smoke-free policy; distributing yard signs designed by 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Lee County (pictured above); and airing videos we created with 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Lee County (more on the videos in the section below).
- Leslie County: The community of Leslie County is ready and supportive of a policy being passed. However, due to their being a county jail, there has been some hesitation amongst the county leaders as the sale of e-cigarettes is a money maker for the jail.
- Letcher County: Letcher County has a partial policy, in order to make it comprehensive, it needs to be updated to include e-cigarettes. We have received a lot of opposition from the leadership because of the county jail.
- Wolfe County: Our perception here is that the leadership is just not ready to have a conversation with us in regards to policy. We are always assessing for signs of readiness and in the meantime, we will be providing education and awareness to the community.

## Scan Me!

These are videos that were created during a partnership with the Lee County Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Class. This project gave students the opportunity to learn about advocacy work and voice their opinions on smoke-free policy in their county. These videos will be aired on social media, local news stations, and during Lee Co. Fiscal Court meetings.

\*Videos can be found under the tobacco tab on the Health Promotion Page.\*



## Our Boots On The Ground



For Updates On Our Policy Work, Follow Our Facebook Page

Kentucky River District Health Department

