by Sherry Milligan

# Support Runs Strong For Smoke-Free Flights

The AARC has made a name for itself. Two years ago, the Association conducted a poll of airline passengers regarding their attitudes on smoking on airlines. As Congress prepared itself to deal with a continuation of the ban, they turned to the AARC.

Executive Director Sam Giordano reviewed the methodology of the AARC's survey.

Congressman Richard Durbin (D-IL) was the original author of legislation in the House of Representatives that led to a ban of smoking on flights of two hours or less. The ban, which went into effect April 1988, is scheduled to expire in April 1990, if not extended by legislative initiative. Earlier this year, Durbin had already begun to introduce new legislation that would make this ban a permanent one, extend it, or, better still, extend it to all airline flights. He turned to the AARC because no current data were available on public opinion of the ban. He knew we had worked hard to produce viable opinion information on our first survey that had ultimately helped pass the temporary ban. Durbin also knew that time was of the essence. Crucial hearings were taking place in Congress, and the more information he had supporting the ban, the better. He asked the AARC to conduct another nationwide survey — and to do it soon.

The AARC got right to work. Since we had already undertaken a similar survey effort in 1987, the AARC's House of Delegates was prepared to move quickly to do this survey a second time. Within a month, delegates had rallied forces back in their states and had received permission from local airports to perform the survey. During the last week of April, representatives of the AARC positioned themselves in airport terminals and asked passers-by about their attitudes on airline flight smoking bans.

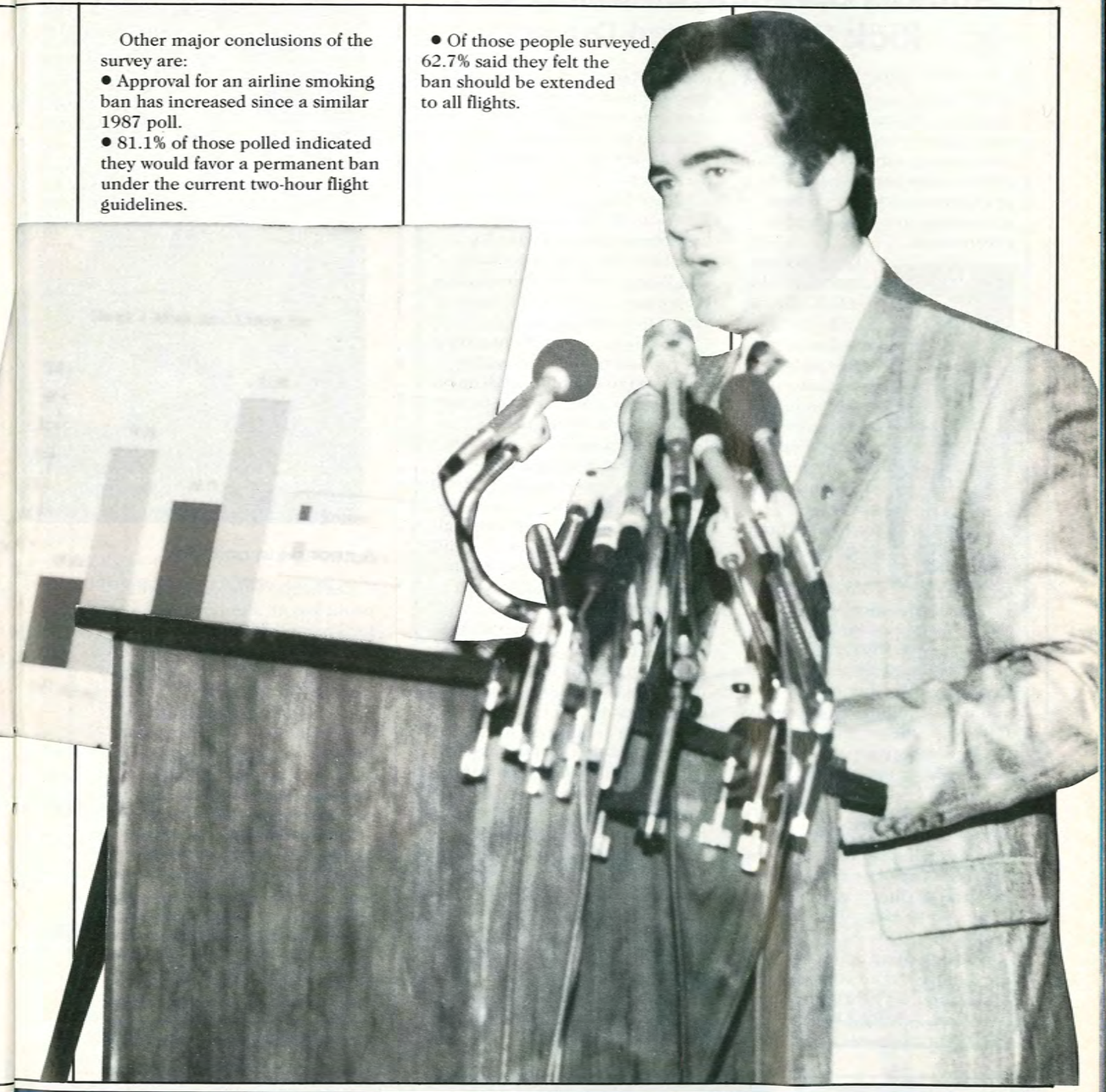
## The conclusions

When the information was tallied, we found that 27,677 airline passengers had been surveyed. This was an excellent response, just shy of the 33,000 passengers surveyed in 1987. The results showed that travelers overwhelmingly support the current ban of smoking on flights of two hours or less — 84% approved of the current ban, 12.2% did not approve, and 3.8% had no opinion. Interestingly, a majority of smokers approve of the current ban and also would favor making this two-hour ban permanent.

The 27,000+ travelers surveyed came from 66 airports in 33 states across the country. Specifically, 58.1% of smokers approve of the current ban, and 51.7% would favor a permanent ban.

Other major conclusions of the survey are:

- Approval for an airline smoking ban has increased since a similar 1987 poll.
- 81.1% of those polled indicated they would favor a permanent ban under the current two-hour flight guidelines.
- Of those people surveyed, 62.7% said they felt the ban should be extended to all flights.



# Authors of Airline Smoking Ban Kick Off Renewal Drive

WASHINGTON — The authors of the federal smoking ban on short-haul airline flights kicked off their legislative campaign to permanently extend the ban at the AARC's press conference on June 20. They cited "solid evidence" of the law's public support and effectiveness.

Dick Durbin

Reps. Richard J. Durbin (D-IL) and C.W. Bill Young (R-FL), coauthors of the airline smoking ban enacted by Congress in 1987, said experience shows the law has worked extremely well and is overwhelmingly endorsed by the flying public — even by a majority of airline passengers who smoke. The smoking ban expires in 1990 unless renewed by Congress.

"Two years ago, the tobacco industry was predicting rebellion and violence in the air because of this law. It's no surprise they've been proven wrong again, as they have so many times before," Durbin and Young said in a joint statement. "Even most smokers realize this law has helped improve the health and safety of everyone who flies. Today we are kicking off the drive in Congress to permanently clean up the air in airplanes."

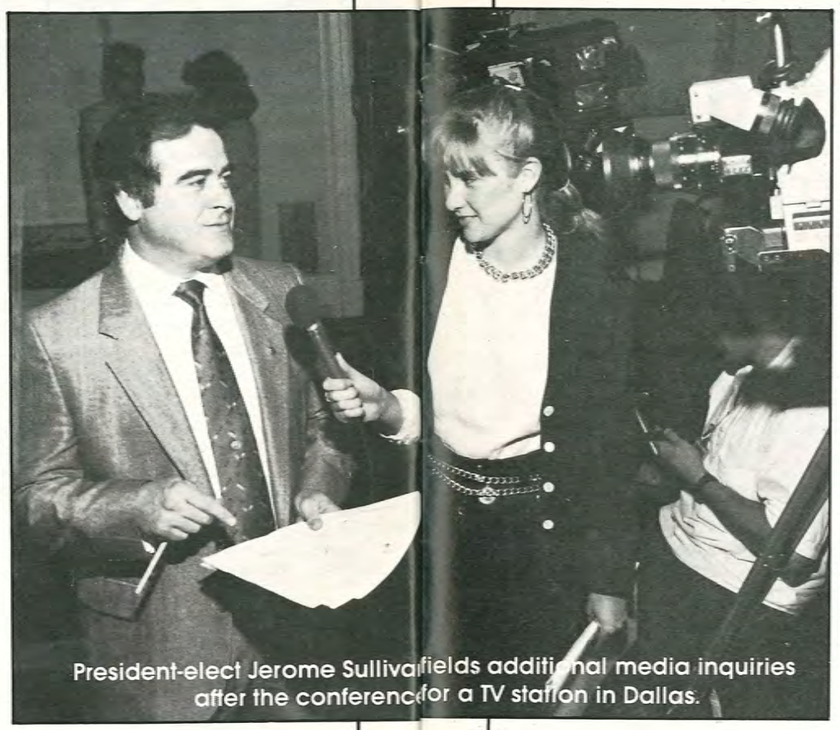
Also appearing at the press conference was an official of the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA), who cited Federal Aviation Administration reports of only 113 "enforcement actions" taken under the smoking ban in the year since the law was passed, out of roughly 455 million airline passengers.

"These findings show that the American flying public not only has accepted this smoking ban, they have welcomed it," Durbin and Young said. "We cannot allow the tobacco industry to force a return to the smoky skies."

The airline smoking ban took effect on April 23, 1988, and is scheduled to expire in 1990 unless extended by Congress. Durbin and Young have cosponsored legislation in the 101st Congress (HR106) that would permanently renew the existing smoking ban on two-hour flights. The measure has 145 cosponsors in the House and was the subject of a public hearing June 22 before the House Public Works and Transportation Subcommittee on Aviation.

The Durbin/Young ban on airline smoking represents the first time Congress has ever restricted the actual use of tobacco for public health reasons, as opposed to its advertising or labeling. It was enacted with the support of the nation's airline flight attendant unions and numerous health groups, despite strong opposition from the tobacco lobby.

A ban on airline smoking was strongly recommended for health reasons for the National Academy of Sciences in 1986, about the same time that a report by the U.S. Surgeon General documented the health threats posed to nonsmokers by "secondhand" or "passive" smoke in enclosed areas.


President-elect Jerome Sullivan fields additional media inquiries after the conference for a TV station in Dallas.

### A change in attitude

The latest statistics show the public has an increased approval for a ban of smoking on airlines. The 1987 survey, which polled over 33,000 airline passengers, showed that 64% favored a ban of smoking on all commercial airlines. This latest poll shows that acceptance of the ban and approval of the concept of smoke-free flights may now rate higher, with 84% of those surveyed approving.

Smokers made up 24.5% of those surveyed. In 1987, 29.8% of smokers indicated they favored a ban of smoking on all commercial airlines. In the latest survey, when asked, "Do you approve of the current ban of smoking on flights of two hours or less?" 58.1% of smokers indicated their approval.

As might be expected, nonsmokers approved of the ban in greater numbers. According to the survey (which represented 75% nonsmokers), 92.8% of nonsmokers approved of the ban, while 4.2% did not. Slightly fewer of them favor a permanent ban — 91.1% would favor a permanent ban, 5.5% would not, and 3.4% said they did not know.

### The press conference

Conducting the survey was only phase one of the project. We also had to get this information into the hands of the people who needed it — and to demonstrate the public's overwhelming support for smoke-free flights. On June 20, just prior to hearings in the House Aviation Subcommittee on Cabin Air Quality, the AARC announced the results of its report in a press conference in Washington, DC. The press conference was held in

# A Challenge: AARC Asks Tobacco Institute To Participate In Cooperative Efforts

As expected, the Tobacco Institute attended the AARC's press conference that released the results of its public opinion poll on smoking.

Representatives of the Tobacco Institute handed out their own press release, which questioned the results of the AARC's survey. Their press release said, "The Tobacco Institute today criticized a poll conducted by the AARC on airline smoking issues, calling it inconsistent with other data on the issue."

The release criticized the AARC's 1987 poll for incomplete information. This information was subsequently provided to them by the AARC in 1988; however, the Tobacco Institute did not reference that fact.

The release went on to say, "If the AARC wishes to express public opinion, they should do so in their own name, instead of under the guise of public opinion. This generation of self-serving, questionable data amounts to little more than the polling equivalent of a shady sales pitch — neither stand up to questioning or scrutiny..."

In response to the tobacco industry's comments, the AARC issued a challenge to them to work with us in conducting a public opinion poll. In an effort to take this issue to the public, the Association released the following news release three days after the press conference.

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DALLAS, TX — The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) today issued a challenge to the Tobacco Institute to work with them in determining just how the public feels about the current ban of smoking on airline flights of two hours or less.

"We invite the Tobacco Institute to join us in designing a survey to gauge public opinion on smoking in public places, specifically on airlines," says Sam Giordano, executive director of the AARC.

The Tobacco Institute issued a criticism of the Association's recently released poll on the attitudes of airline passengers toward the ban of smoking on flights of two hours or less.

The AARC released its report on June 20. Of the 27,677 airline passengers surveyed, 84% approve of the current ban, and 81% would like to see that ban extended permanently. The present ban expires in April 1990 if not extended by congressional action. Additionally, 58% of smokers approve of the ban and 52% favor its permanent extension.

The Tobacco Institute criticized the AARC's survey as being "incomplete" and "suspect."

"Our goal is to put this issue to rest. We want to get at the truth, be objective, and minimize the confusion of and contradictory information given to the public," says Giordano. "We'll live with whatever results the survey shows. We challenge the Tobacco Industry to do the same."

the capital with Congressman Durbin and three other congressmen who are cosponsoring legislation with Durbin. Also, a member of the Association of Flight Attendants

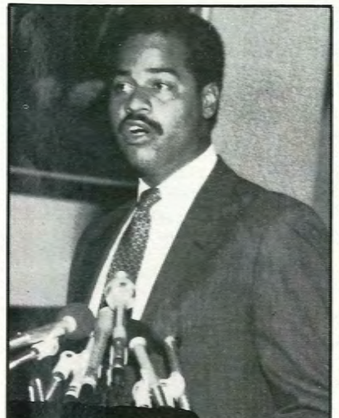
Susan Bianchi-Sand, president of the AFA, discussed enforcement of the current ban by flight attendants.

gave testimony on the flight attendants' support for smoke-free flights.

While the AARC was in Washington releasing results of the survey, delegates and chartered affiliate presidents were busy in their local communities drumming up media support and attention to the survey results. As a result of these two efforts, the AARC and its members received much attention in the media the week of June 20, as the issue of smoking on airlines becomes a hot potato in Washington once more.

"USA Today" aired a short segment on the survey on its evening TV magazine show and the next day referenced the release of information on the front page of their morning edition. Other journalists and health reporters in Washington came to the press conference and conducted interviews with AARC representatives and congressmen supporting airline smoking bans.

Presenting for the AARC was President-elect Jerome Sullivan, who gave the results of the survey. Executive Director Sam Giordano

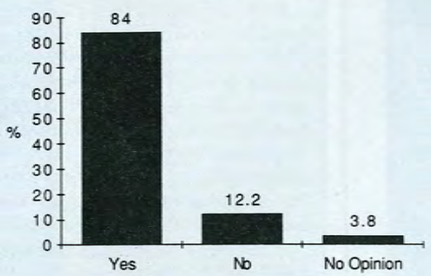


Alan Wheat (D-MO) lends his support to the airline smoking bill.

reviewed the methodology and then introduced Congressmen Dick Durbin, Bill Young (R-FL), Alan Wheat (D-MO), and Bob Whittaker (R-KS). Dr. Morris Brown, chairman of the AARC's Board of Medical Advisors, and President Paul Mathews were also on hand at the press conference to serve as resources. Immediately following the press conference, the AARC reps stationed themselves by the phones to wait for media calls.

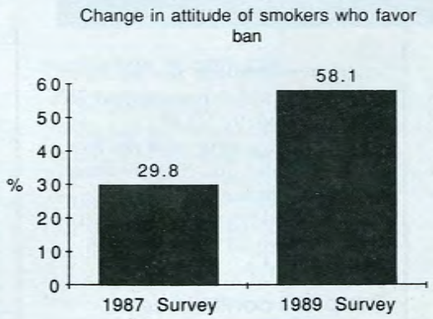
"We feel the effort was very successful," says Jerry Sullivan. "Our intent was to focus attention on the AARC's efforts in this area, and we are happy with the amount of coverage we got in the media. Just as important, the AARC's Washington profile has been elevated once more. We are seen as *the* source of information on this subject. We can't ask for any better public recognition than that." ●

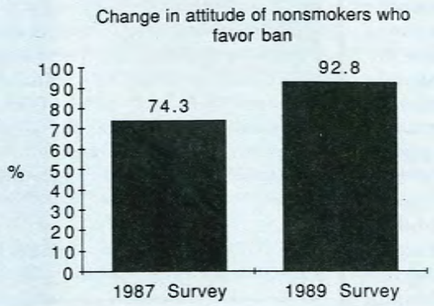
# Public Attitudes Support Smoke-Free Flights



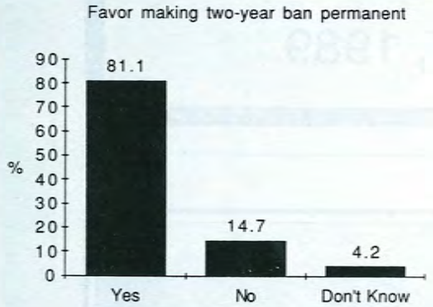

● Of the 27,677 people polled, 84% approve of the current ban, 12.2% do not approve, and 3.8% had no opinion.

The 1989 AARC Public Opinion Poll on Airline Smoking was conducted at airports all across the country during the last week of April. A total of 27,677 people were polled at 66 airports in 33 states. Volunteers of the American Association for Respiratory Care posed five questions to passers-by in airline terminals to ascertain how airline passengers felt about the ban of smoking on flights of two hours or less. Specifically, major points of the study show that:

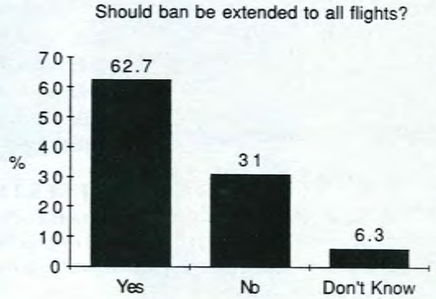



● Approval for an airline smoking ban has increased since a similar 1987 poll.




● 81.1% of those polled indicated they would favor a permanent ban under the current two-hour flight guidelines.

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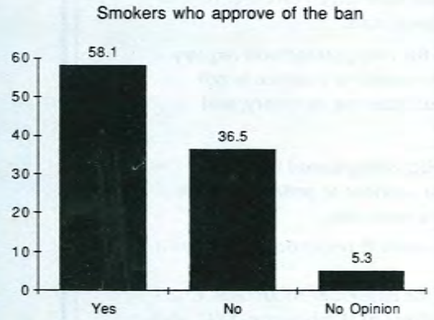

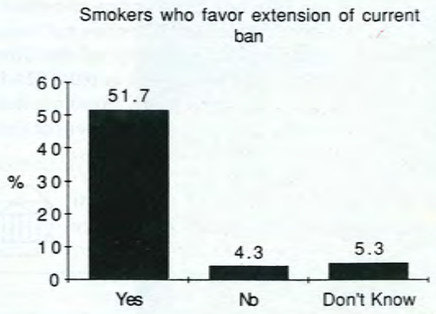
● Of respondents who indicated they smoke cigarettes, 58.1% approve of the current ban, and 51.7% would favor a permanent ban.