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How did San Bernardino, Los Angeles counties fare in this year's tobacco and smoking report?

By Jim Steinberg, The Sun

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In an annual scorecard showing where California stands on tobacco control policies, the [American Lung Association in California](#) gave a grade of C and two Ds to cities in San Bernardino County. The rest of the group of 24 got Fs.

In neighboring Los Angeles County, six cities got As, including one — Manhattan Beach — that raised last year's D to an A.

The grades were part of the organization's State of Tobacco Control Report 2016, which was released Wednesday. The report looks back at what happened in 2015, analyzing policies in all 482 incorporated cities in California.

Regarding San Bernardino's showing: "Hopefully that will change in a year," said Corie Goldman, advocacy director for the American Lung Association's San Bernardino office.

This year, Goldman said her job duties have been shifted to allow her to work more closely with elected officials and grassroots community groups to explain what policies are available to encourage a more secondhand smoke-free environment for residents.

"My focus will be San Bernardino County," she said.

In the San Bernardino County report, the Lung Association gave a grade of C to Loma Linda, and Ds to Rancho Cucamonga and Apple Valley.

In Los Angeles County, the American Lung Association gave As to Baldwin Park, Compton, Huntington Park, Manhattan Beach, Glendale and Santa Monica.

"Manhattan Beach was the star this year," said John Yi, advocacy director for the American Lung Association's Los Angeles office. The city moved from a D in the organization's 2015 report, to an A in the current report.

It was the only newcomer to the A honor roll of Los Angeles County, Yi said.

The city of Los Angeles received a C.

"Once a national leader in tobacco control efforts, California continues to fall behind other states in

protecting its residents from the burden of tobacco,” the organization’s 14th annual report says.

“Despite an historic opportunity in the California Legislature last year, state lawmakers failed yet again to enact tobacco control policies that could save lives and reduce the \$18 billion in annual health care costs due to smoking.”

A package of tobacco bills was under consideration last year but did not become laws, Yi said.

These included:

- A bill regulating electronic cigarettes as tobacco products.
- Raising the minimum smoking age to 21.
- Providing better smoke-free protections in the workplace (closing a few loopholes).
- Prohibiting the use of all tobacco products on school grounds.
- Allowing local counties to tax tobacco products.
- Changing the statewide licensing fee from a one-time fee to an annual fee to better cover the costs of running the program.

In addition to this package of regulatory bills, the legislature also was asked to consider a tobacco tax, which also did not pass, Yi said.

The American Lung Association in California is part of Save Lives California, a coalition of major health groups working to place a \$2 tobacco tax on the November ballot. The tax would generate revenue to expand treatment services for Medi-Cal patients with tobacco-related and other illnesses, support existing statewide programs to prevent youth from using tobacco, increase funding for medical research into new treatments and cures for deadly diseases such as cancer and lung disease, and restore California’s leadership in tobacco control efforts, the report said.

California has not raised its tobacco tax since 1999 and now ranks 35th in the country at 87 cents per cigarette pack, far behind states like New York, Illinois, Texas, Florida, Oregon and Washington, the report said.

Housing authorities for both the city and county of Los Angeles adopted smoke-free policies last year, Yi said.

The Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino will beginning moving in that direction this year and expects to have all of its units operate smoke-free by mid-2017, said Ana Gamiz, director of policy and public affairs. A few units within its system have been smoke-free as early as 2009, she said.

The full report is available at www.stateoftobaccocontrol.org/california2016

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20160203/how-did-san-bernardino-los-angeles-counties-fare-in-this-years-tobacco-and-smoking-report>

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