



# GASP

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## 10-7-15 PRESS RELEASE

### ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS VOTE IN FAVOR OF SMOKEFREE COUNTY PARKS

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On October 7, 2015 the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders voted on final reading for an ordinance requiring County parks be smokefree. [Freeholder Brendan Gill](#) has spearheaded the ordinance initiative, and Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy (GASP), based in Summit (NJ) served as an educational resource provider to the Board, and will be in attendance.

"It's our priority to ensure the children and families utilizing Essex County's parks have a safe and healthy environment to enjoy, and this resolution takes a significant step in that direction," **said Freeholder Gill**. "The dangers that tobacco and second hand smoke pose are well-documented, so we must take every step possible to ensure that Essex County residents have access to the basic right of clean air. I remain committed to working with great organizations like GASP to continue creating safe spaces for the people of Essex County to enjoy."

**Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake** noted, "We're concerned about the health of our children playing in parks. Secondhand smoke is harmful. This ordinance protects our children."

**GASP's Executive Director Karen Blumenfeld, Esq.**, shares her enthusiasm. "We are so thankful to Freeholder Gill for spearheading this initiative, and for the leadership and support of Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake. This law will positively impact the health of the almost 800,000 County residents, plus visitors." Blumenfeld shared that "14 Essex County towns already require smokefree municipal parks, so a county-wide smokefree parks policy will bring consistency to those communities. And going smokefree aligns with the county's environmentally sustainable initiatives as well as its health and wellness campaigns."

**According to GASP's ordinance database, 14 Essex County municipalities have 100% smokefree parks and recreational areas ordinances:** Belleville, East Orange, Fairfield, Irvington, Livingston, Maplewood, Millburn, Montclair, Newark, Nutley, Orange, Roseland, South Orange and West Orange. Up until today, Essex County only makes its Turtle Back Zoo smokefree.

"There's no safe level of secondhand smoke even outdoors. Outdoor levels can be as high as indoor smoking-permitted places," notes Blumenfeld. "Tobacco is the #1 cause of preventable disease and death. It makes sense for Essex County parks to be 100% smokefree."

GASP and 4-H teens collected 5 pounds of tobacco waste at the County's Riverbank Park in Newark. Cigarette butts were also at the new South Mountain Reservation reservoir walking trail. "The new smokefree county parks policy will reduce tobacco litter and risk of preventable fires, leading to decreased maintenance costs," notes Blumenfeld.

**About GASP:** GASP is a 40-year old non-profit that tracks laws and policies on tobacco-free living and smokefree environments, and provides technical assistance on emerging trends in tobacco control and policy. Learn more at [www.njgasp.org](http://www.njgasp.org) and our [Facebook page](#). GASP is a grantee of the [NJ Department of Health's Office of Minority and Multicultural Health](#).