



Center Community Organizing Update

The Influence of the Neighborhood Market Association

This past March, the West Hollywood (WeHo) City Council passed an ordinance which prohibited any retailers from opening a new tobacco retail store within 600 feet of schools. However, it grandfathered the five existing retailers currently located within 600 feet of a school and allowed them to transfer their tobacco business to new owners forever, guaranteeing the on-going sale of tobacco close to schools.

This disappointing result was one of the first introductions of Los Angeles area tobacco control advocates to the power of the Neighborhood Market Association (NMA), a revitalized tobacco industry funded front group that has thrown a wrench into local tobacco control policy making in several communities around the state. As we learned, the NMA was way ahead of us from the beginning. The NMA knew that WeHo was considering such an ordinance before tobacco control advocates learned of it; and they were busy lobbying city council to grandfather existing retailers and allow them to transfer their store to someone else before we made our first contact.

Our belated efforts to educate council members seemed to have convinced the council to reconsider



the transferability of the stores, but the NMA worked behind the scenes to recruit the West

Are you aware of the latest tobacco industry front group in California?

It's the Neighborhood Market Association (NMA). This group has been around for a while but recently they have been sabotaging local TRL policy efforts around the state. The Center has a [new fact sheet on the NMA](#) and is ready to help you expose this tobacco industry front group to your elected officials.

Organizing to Defeat the NMA

With the Neighborhood Market Association (NMA) organizing in communities across the state what can you and your coalition do?

First, you need to be even better prepared and better organized in your campaigns. Often the first sign of NMA in a community is their testimony at a council/BOS meeting. This means you cannot just have the typical health-focused coalition members presenting to council/BOS meetings. Elected officials take the NMA's argument about the potential impact of our policies on their business seriously, because of the political clout that retailers have. To counter that, you need to have political clout on your side of the argument too. This means you need community and business leaders on your side, you need to have powerful resident stories, and you need to have the support of people the elected officials know and trust. Without this strong local political support you will be defeated by the NMA.

Secondly, you need to make sure the NMA doesn't have access to your coalition meetings where your plans are being discussed. In several communities

Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and a local retailer affected by the 600 feet policy to pressure the Councilmembers to again include the transferability clause. The final Council vote reaffirmed the NMA lobbying position.

The American Lung Association did not support the Council's decision, but kept a positive relationship with Councilmembers throughout. However, it was clear that the NMA grabbed the early lead and held it despite our best efforts.

So the lesson is... Be prepared. Don't let the NMA sneak into your community. Stay in close touch with your local officials and be prepared to fight back when and if the NMA comes to a neighborhood near you.

*Want to learn even more about the NMA?
[Click here](#) to read a story on our blog about the
experiences of the coalition in Fresno
and to share your story.*

throughout the state representatives of the NMA have tried to attend tobacco control coalition meetings. However, tobacco control coalitions are meetings of the membership of the coalition, not of the public; therefore the NMA should not be allowed to attend your tobacco coalition meetings. If for some reason your coalition isn't set up this way, your coalition bylaws and membership requirements should be modified to ensure it is. In addition, separating the campaign team working on the policy from the coalition is always a good idea.

Lastly, it is important to call out the NMA wherever they show up. The NMA is a trade group representing grocers and convenience stores, and it has ties to the tobacco industry and to Philip Morris in particular. More details about these connections can be found in [this document](#) available from the Center. You should share this information with your elected officials so that they are aware that the NMA is not merely looking out for small retailers. Elected officials need to be told that to do what the NMA wants them to, they are taking the side of the tobacco industry, and against protecting families and kids in their community.

The NMA has proven to be a strong countervailing force to our local tobacco control policies. It is important that your coalition take action even before they have a presence to ensure your policy is successful.

The Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing assists local Prop 99 funded projects throughout the state meet policy objectives using proven community organizing strategies, and serves as a statewide and local tobacco policy resource. The Center is a project of the American Lung Association in California and is funded by the California Tobacco Control Program.

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