



Appleton  
Fox Cities  
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## Editorial: Smoking ban bill is win for public

The goal is within reach. And do you know who we have to thank for that?

You.

Legislators working on a statewide workplace smoking ban bill announced last week that, in cooperation with organizations on both sides of the issue, they had reached an agreement.

A statewide ban would go into effect on July 5, 2010, and would include bars and restaurants. The bill, co-authored in the Senate by Sen. Mike Ellis, R-Neenah, and in the Assembly by Rep. Al Ott, R-Forest Junction, is expected to get a vote Wednesday.

Though passage isn't guaranteed, the agreement is a monumental step in a process that began more than four years ago. Appleton voters passed a workplace smoking ban in April 2005 and have reaffirmed that vote twice. Since the first vote, which made Appleton one of the first communities in the state to ban smoking, many people have pushed for a statewide ban.

Early efforts in the Legislature to pass a bill met with no success, in large part because of the objection of the Tavern League of Wisconsin. The differences between what ban proponents wanted and what ban opponents would accept were just too great. And some key legislative leaders refused to allow a strict ban to even come to a vote.

But public sentiment for a statewide ban grew over time. In a legislative process seemingly dominated by lobbyists' special interests and legislators' self-interest, the public's voice broke through.

Without the overwhelming support of state residents in favor of a ban, there would be no reason this bill would be on the verge of becoming law.

The major compromise is the starting date, more than a year from now. While we'd prefer the ban start sooner, we appreciate the sentiment behind the delay. It'll give bar and restaurant owners plenty of time to make whatever accommodations they want to make for outside smoking, and it'll give the economy some time to bounce back and reduce whatever negative effects a ban might have on a business.

The bottom line is that a ban appears to be on the way. For that, we're grateful — to you.

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