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Doyle signs statewide smoking ban for bars, restaurants, workplaces

By [Patrick Marley](#) of the Journal Sentinel

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Madison - Gov. Jim Doyle signed a smoking ban Monday, making bars, restaurants and other workplaces smoke-free starting next summer.

"Today is a day that we all can take a deep breath and enjoy the accomplishment that will occur here today," Doyle said just before signing the bill in the Capitol.

A ban has long been a priority of Doyle's, but lawmakers were unable to reach a deal in the last two-year legislative session. The Democrat-controlled Legislature [passed a compromise](#) last week that bans smoking in virtually all workplaces but delays the start date until July 5, 2010 - later than Doyle and other supporters wanted.

Indian-run casinos are exempt from the ban because lawmakers do not have the power to fully regulate them under federal law. Also exempt are existing cigar bars and specialty tobacco shops.

Opponents of the ban said it would force some taverns to close, particularly in northern Wisconsin and other rural spots. They also argued government shouldn't tell private businesses what to do in a free-market system.

But Doyle said the dire predictions of opponents haven't come true in La Crosse, Appleton and 35 other communities with local bans.

"Smoke-free businesses can thrive," Doyle said.

The local bans will remain in effect until the state ban begins. Local governments will not be able to ban businesses from having outdoor smoking areas, but they could make other areas smoke-free that are not covered by the state ban, such as parks.

Doyle said he had hoped Wisconsin could have been on the forefront of enacting a ban, noting that tobacco giant North Carolina beat Wisconsin by a matter of hours last week in passing a ban.

Rep. Jon Richards (D-Milwaukee) said the local bans helped push the legislation through despite past opposition from legislative leaders from both parties.

"There were so many communities that went smoke-free - 37 communities. That really changed the

landscape," he said.

The bill includes forfeitures of \$100 to \$250 for violations. Business owners will get a warning the first time, but smokers could be fined for first offenses.

The ban comes at a time when Doyle and other Democrats want to raise the cigarette tax by 75 cents a pack, to \$2.52. The state collected \$485.5 million in tobacco taxes in the last fiscal year.

[The ban passed](#) the Senate 25-8 and the Assembly 61-38 Wednesday.

In the Senate, eight Republicans joined 17 Democrats in voting for the bill. Democrat Kathleen Vinehout of Alma and seven Republicans voted against it.

In the Assembly, 48 Democrats and 13 Republicans voted for the ban. Five Democrats, 32 Republicans and independent Jeff Wood of Bloomer voted against it.

Senate President Fred Risser (D-Madison) said he was elated to get the bill passed after fighting tobacco for more than 50 years in office. Risser said he had a bill around 1962 to make it illegal for those under 16 to smoke, but the measure was defeated 4-1 in committee.

"There's been almost a 100% reversal" in society's view of smoking, he said.

Doyle signed the bill in the Capitol and held news conferences at Cempazuchi restaurant, 1205 E. Brady St., Milwaukee, and Tiletown Brewing Co. in Green Bay.



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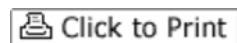
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