

# BAN

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taverns," said Hopper's spokesman Ryan Murray. "After three years, it would be a complete ban. He believes it should be uniform across the state."

Murray said he believes Hopper would support a provision that would keep a ban intact in communities that already enacted one, including Fond du Lac.

The three-year phase-in would give business owners time to adjust to the new rules or sell their business.

## Support from governor

Gov. James Doyle is an enthusiastic supporter of a smoking ban. Last week, he reiterated his support during his 45-minute State of the State speech, stating that Wisconsin should not be the 48th or 49th state to pass a ban.

However, Townsend said Doyle's mention of his support for a ban received a "cool" reception and was one of the few proposals that did not receive a standing ovation.

While statewide smoking ban legislation died last year, newly-elected Assembly Speaker Mike Sheridan said the prospects for a ban to pass in the Assembly look good.

Senate Majority Leader Russ Decker has been opposed to a statewide ban in the past.

However, those working toward a statewide ban said the momentum achieved as communities across Wisconsin have passed smoking restrictions should put pressure on lawmakers to pass a statewide ban this time around.

## Smoking bans and OWI

Townsend said several months ago he heard a presentation at UW-

Oshkosh that explored the relationship between smoking bans and drunken driving arrests.

"The argument is that if you have a smoking ban, it would diminish the number of OWIs (operating while intoxicated)," he said. "The number of OWI offenses, the study found out, was just the opposite of that. The reason was very dedicated smokers would travel to areas (where) they could smoke."

Could OWI incidents increase in Fond du Lac County because of the ban?

It depends if city smokers start traveling to neighboring North Fond du Lac or outlying townships not impacted by a smoking ban.

Townsend also noted there is talk the federal

cigarette tax could increase from 36 cents per pack to \$1 per pack.

"If that does indeed happen," he said, "that would put the average price of cigarettes here in Wisconsin close to \$6 per pack."

The increase would impact lower-income households to a greater extent than higher-income households.

"The question is trying to use a tax basis to establish social policy," Townsend said. "We want to discourage people from smoking. How do you discourage it? Increase the price. And that means revenue is going to decline."

Townsend said he does not think "sin-tax" money should be used to pay for long-term government programs.

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