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Michigan House OKs smoking ban

Detroit's 3 casinos would get an exemption

BY CHRIS CHRISTOFF

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LANSING -- The Michigan House voted Tuesday to ban smoking in workplaces including bars and restaurants, but to allow it on gambling floors at Detroit's three casinos, cigar bars and smoke shops.

The 73-31 vote set up another face-off with the Senate, which last year voted for a total smoking ban, no exceptions.

The smoking ban remains a hot issue, led by antismoking advocates encouraged by smoking bans approved in recent weeks in Wisconsin and North Carolina, a tobacco industry state where a smoking ban was once unimaginable.

But like last year, a stalemate looms again between Michigan's House and Senate over whether to allow smoking in Detroit's casinos. A state-imposed smoking ban would not affect American Indian-run casinos.

The casinos argued that a smoking ban would chase customers away and result in hundreds of lost jobs in Detroit.

Smoking ban advocates argued that secondhand smoke is a health threat to workers where smoking is allowed, and that casino employees should be protected by a prohibition.

An amendment to the House bill to make it a total ban without exception was gaveled down by controlling Democrats.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, said last week that Senate Republicans still prefer a total ban, but hinted there may be room for compromise.

Rep. Bert Johnson, D-Highland Park, whose committee approved the bill last week, challenged the Senate to take up the smoking ban, saying Tuesday's vote affirmed strong support for a ban.

"We are nowhere near finished with this," he added.

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Additional Facts

How to be heard

Contact your representative or senator

at 517-373-1837 from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays or online at www.house.mi.gov or www.senate.mi.gov. Contact the governor at 517-373-3400 or online at www.michigan.gov.

