

Doyle signs smoking ban

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GREEN BAY - With smoking ban supporters at his side, Governor Doyle's pen made it official. Doyle pushed for legislation for three years, and says he finally found the necessary support with a democratically controlled legislature.

"Really this is a good example of why elections matter. There was just a bill that got blocked by leadership because they knew if it came to a vote it would get passed," explained Doyle on the struggle for legislative approval.

The bill signing took place at Tiletown Brewing Company, a restaurant and bar that successfully went smoke free on its own more than a year ago. The owner, Brent Weycker believes businesses should have a choice in the matter, but says to others the reality is the nation is going smoke free.

"I tell them to embrace it and make the most of it and it'll be positive in the long run," said Weycker.

Change can be difficult in today's culture. Wisconsin becomes the 26th state to enact a statewide smoking ban in public workplaces.

"We can now all, after this big battle, we can all take a deep breath and breathe freely in Wisconsin work places," proclaimed Doyle as he proceeded to sign the bill into law.

The National Cancer Society reports exposure to second hand smoke is the 3rd leading cause of preventable death in the United States. It is proven to cause lung cancer, heart disease and serious respiratory illnesses in non-smokers.

"It's going to protect all of those people in workplaces everyday serving in restaurants and bars, decreasing the time they're exposed to tobacco smoke," said Mary Dorn, De Pere Health Department Director.

A few protesters turned out trying to snuff out a little of the governor's excitement. But estimates show less than 20 percent of adults in the state smoke. Many of those are not happy about being kicked outside to partake in their habit.

"I find it ironic on the one hand he wants my tax money and on the other he tells me I can't smoke anywhere except for my own home," said Andrew Ballman.

The statewide ban doesn't begin until July of next year, even though the governor and other supporters would have liked to have seen it go into effect sooner. But the governor says giving bar and other business owners time to prepared for the change is a concession they were willing to make to get the legislation passed.

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