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Politics blog: Statewide smoking ban bill to go before Wisconsin lawmakers

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Supporters of a statewide ban on smoking in bars and restaurants opened a new front in their battle today.

A bipartisan proposal that would take effect just 60 days after it is passed is being put before lawmakers, anti-smoking advocates said.

The bill is the same as a statewide smoking ban included in Gov. Jim Doyle's budget proposal, said Maureen Busalacchi, executive director of Smokefree Wisconsin. The bill's initial sponsors include Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, Sen. Mike Ellis, R-Neenah, Rep. Jon Richards, D-Milwaukee, and Rep. Al Ott, R-Forest Junction.

"We're working both ends," Busalacchi said of the competing ban proposals. "I think it could pass either way."

But Busalacchi also acknowledged facing bipartisan opposition to the proposal, which includes the powerful Tavern League of Wisconsin. Supporters say the ban will improve public health but opponents say it could cause some taverns to go out of business.

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