 Click to Print[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)[Home](#) » [News](#) » [Politics](#) Politics

Legislative committees advance smoking ban

By [Steven Walters](#) of the Journal Sentinel

Posted: May. 8, 2009

Madison - Two legislative committees Friday approved a proposed statewide indoor smoking ban that would become law July 5, 2010, clearing it for votes in the full Legislature on Wednesday.

The Assembly Health and Health Care Reform Committee voted 11-2 for the compromise. The vote in the Senate Health, Health Insurance, Privacy, Property Tax Relief and Revenue Committee was 5-2.

The bipartisan committee votes suggest that the ban will be approved by the Legislature next week.

In the Senate committee, Sen. Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) offered an amendment that would have moved the effective date of the smoking ban to Jan. 3, but it got no support.

The Senate committee's chairman, Jon Erpenbach (D-Waunakee), said he expects several proposed changes in the smoking ban to be offered on the Senate floor Wednesday. Those will include other attempts to move up the date the measure would take effect.

The July 2010 date was negotiated among aides to Gov. Jim Doyle, legislative leaders and the Tavern League of Wisconsin. Doyle has made the smoking ban one of his top priorities. The powerful Tavern League wanted a phase-in period so that its members could make changes to their businesses to accommodate smokers.

The measure allows businesses to set up outdoor smoking areas, which local officials could not regulate. Local governments could regulate outside smoking areas only in public areas such as parks or government property.

The compromise includes a forfeiture of \$100 to \$250 for violators, but that could not be assessed for first-time violations. It would also ban smoking in hotel rooms, changing the current practice of allowing hotels to designate some of their rooms for smokers.

Rep. Jon Richards (D-Milwaukee), chairman of the Assembly committee, said 37 communities in Wisconsin have enacted smoking bans on their own. A statewide ban is needed because secondhand smoke poses severe health risks, he said.

Rep. Amy Sue Vruwink (D-Milladore) said the ban will hurt small taverns in her rural district that have been operated by the same families for generations. She ended up voting for the change but said she will attempt to rewrite parts of it when the full Assembly debates it Wednesday.

Rep. Pat Strachota (R-West Bend) voted against the ban, saying it doesn't create a "level playing field" because smoking will still be allowed in tribal casinos.

Richards said the tribes are sovereign nations, so they can't be forced to comply with a smoking ban.



NewsWatch Delivered

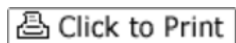
Get the latest local news delivered to your inbox M-F at 2:00 pm..

[Sign up Today](#) | [View Sample](#)

[Sign up Today](#) | [View Sample](#)

Find this article at:

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/44594722.html>



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.