

THE P-C'S  
OPINIONDeal on  
smoking  
ban beats  
no ban

The legislation to create a statewide **smoking ban** actually advanced, passing a Senate committee last week. But it didn't pass intact. It was changed to include a provision that would give bars and restaurants until 2010 to comply with it.

That's not the best solution. The best solution is to pass a comprehensive statewide **smoking ban** that includes bars and restaurants — and goes into effect immediately.

But if the choice is between a compromise that phases in the ban for bars and restaurants, and no ban at all, we'll take the compromise.

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Unfortunately, that looks like the choice in the less-than-enlightened Legislature. The bill as originally written by Rep. Steve Wieckert, R-Appleton, and Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, is really the way to go. But it faces opposition on a couple of key fronts: Senate Majority Leader Russ Decker, D-Schofield, and the Assembly Republican leadership.

In the Senate committee discussion, an amendment to delay the ban for bars and restaurants until 2011 was defeated before the 2010 delay was passed. Really, there's no reason it should take two years for bars and restaurants to figure out how to adjust to the ban. Nor is there a reason why the ban shouldn't start immediately for other workplaces, instead of 2009, as the bill stands now.

But, in this political climate, would a bill that sticks to a full ban from the get-go be passed by 2010?

If the goal is to clear the air in Wisconsin workplaces as soon as possible, this compromise might be the best choice to make that happen.

That's not to say anyone should give up fighting for a

# EDITORIAL: Compromise on smoking ban acceptable

**From C-1**

quicker ban. The sooner we have it, the sooner Appleton bars, which are already under a ban, will have the level playing field they desire. And the sooner we have it, the sooner Wisconsin will join neighboring states Minnesota and Illinois — as well as 20 others — in taking a stand for public health.

There's another fight that needs to continue, too — against further compromises that would weaken the ban.

That's a significant danger, with Decker saying the com-

mittee vote “may lead us to a final compromise.” If there must be a compromise, this should be the final one, unless legislators want to enact the ban sooner.

Then there's Assembly Speaker Mike Huebsch, R-West Salem, who said even the compromise bill probably wouldn't be put up for a vote in his house. That would be an insult to Wisconsin residents who overwhelmingly want a ban.

It's time to pass a smoking ban in Wisconsin, even if we have to wait a while longer for it.