

# Editorial

## Smoking ban is a good idea

In his state of the state address, Gov. Jim Doyle urged Wisconsin to take the next step in smoking cessation programs — a statewide ban. Workplaces, restaurants and bars all **smoke free**. Our neighbors, Minnesota and Illinois have already done it. So, why haven't we yet? In all honesty, we can't figure out why the government has not put their foot down and squashed smoking in public places.

Some say that by banning smoking from bars and restaurants, those businesses will see a decrease in revenue and have to close. This topic was brought up when Madison bars had their initial **smoking ban**. Yet we still see people frequenting the establishments; the smokers just have to go outside if they want to light up. Sure, they may have lost some money from their **cigarette** sales but we are sure they can make up for it in other ways.

The comeback by many smokers who do not want to see the activity banned is that if people don't like it, maybe they shouldn't patronize places that allow smoking. We suppose we could do this. But who would really feel the loss? If all non-smokers chose not to patronize bars or restaurants where smoking is currently allowed, we are sure those establishments will lose revenue. Which, in turn, could force them to hike prices for their smoking-only clientele who will then not have just the increased prices of **cigarettes** to complain about.

Others say that it infringes on the rights of bar and restaurant owners and forces them to be regulated by the government. Isn't the government already regulating them when it comes to health standards? Could a non-smoking atmosphere just be part of those standards by keeping the patrons safe from harmful chemicals in the air? Any establishment serving food would not give the patrons a burger that had fallen on the floor, why would they want to expose their clients to cancer-causing elements?

We know there are many medical reasons to avoid **cigarette** smoke, either first- or second-hand. Cancer, emphysema, asthma, and many other health problems we could develop because of those smoking around us. The days of smokers saying that it doesn't harm anyone else are long gone. There has been research to show what being in the proximity of someone smoking can do to the human body. And there are other non-life threatening effects of second-hand smoke. Namely, smelling like an ashtray after leaving a place where smoking is allowed. Not only that, but who really wants their smoked salmon to smell like it's been puffing away before being served to you?

We know the government cannot stop people from smoking altogether but they can find ways to restrict the habit. And one of those ways is to ban smoking from bars and restaurants. If people want to light up that badly, they will go outside to smoke. But for those of us who would rather not have to endure a smoking patron at a restaurant our only choice is to not frequent the establishment. Even the non-smoking sections are not 100 percent clear of smoke.

We hope by the end of 2008, Wisconsin becomes a **smoke-free** state that we can all breath freely in.