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## Editorial: Leaders block the will of the people

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### Issue:

Vote on the smoking ban

The matter of a statewide ban on smoking in workplaces is an idea whose time has come. The issue has been debated to death, the public has made its preferences known, and the votes to pass the ban are there in the state Legislature.

The only thing standing in the way are the leaders of both parties who won't allow their peers to bring the matter to a vote.

State Sen. Roger Breske, D-Eland, a former bar owner and president of the Wisconsin Tavern League, had the temerity Wednesday to declare the matter dead and "back to square one." Breske and, more importantly, Senate Majority Leader Russ Decker, D-Weston, are pushing for giving tavern owners until 2011 until the ban takes effect.

As it emerged from a Senate committee, the ban would take effect Jan. 1, 2009, except for bar owners who would have an extra year. Given that inch, Breske and Decker are pushing for a mile.

Meanwhile, Assembly Speaker Mike Huebsch, R-West Salem, has said he won't even schedule a vote on the ban anyway.

Our elected representatives are sent to do the will of the people, not block it. An ever-shrinking minority has the ear of legislative leaders and is standing in the way of progress.

How long does it take to prepare for a smoking ban? It took Brent Weycker, owner of Green Bay's Titledown Brewing Co., about three days. He announced his bar was voluntarily going smoke-free on a Thursday night; the ban went into effect the following Monday.

The deal currently blocked in the Senate gives tavern owners 23 months. That's plenty of time. Decker, Breske and Huebsch have lost the public debate; it's time for them to recognize the reality and allow the vote.

And if they fail to listen to the public, lawmakers in both parties need to consider whether their leaders are up to the job.