

# Governors partner to back smoke ban

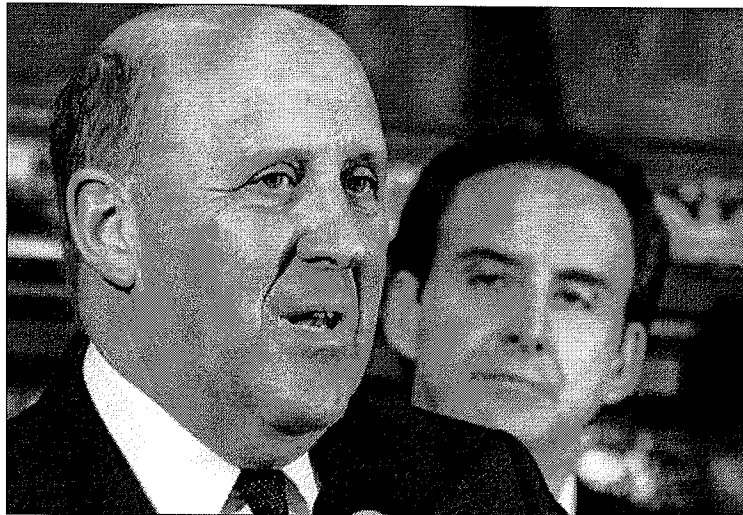
by Scott Wentz

Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty supports Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle's effort to adopt a statewide smoking ban in his state, highlighting an issue on which the executives from opposing political parties agree.

Pawlenty, a Republican, supported the near-complete statewide ban on smoking in public places that Minnesota lawmakers passed last year. He said the issue can be controversial, but said the ban is widely supported and is curbing interest in smoking.

"I think the track record in every community or region or state that has passed this pretty quickly reveals itself to be a positive change overall," he said Wednesday.

Pawlenty said Minnesota's



Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle said his state should follow Minnesota's lead and adopt a statewide smoking ban in public places. Doyle met Wednesday with Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, right, in St. Paul primarily to discuss energy issues.

ban, in effect since October, has been a success, though he added there have been a few exceptions to the mostly smooth transition. He praised

Democrat Doyle's effort.

Doyle said he does "not want to see his state become the ashtray of the Midwest," and that Wisconsin legislators

should vote on the proposal in coming weeks.

"You know that this entire country will be smoke-free in public places in the coming years," he said.

Wisconsin should follow Minnesota's lead, Doyle said.

"I'm glad the Packers took care of the Vikings this year, but in the world of smoking bans you guys won," he said.

Their comments came during a news conference at the Minnesota Capitol in St. Paul, where Pawlenty and Doyle met to discuss energy issues.

Earlier in the week, a Wisconsin Senate committee approved a weakened version of Doyle's smoking ban proposal. The revised plan delays until 2010 the ban's implementation in bars and restaurants.

The Wisconsin

League has led the opposition to Doyle's plan. Businesses say they would lose money under a statewide smoking ban.

When Minnesota's ban was debated by lawmakers last year, critics said it would encourage some smokers to take their business to neighboring states without a similar ban.

Doyle said Wisconsin establishments located near the Minnesota border are seeing less business.

"Once places go smoke free, people really like it," he said. "I'm not so sure our bars that are smoke-filled bars are going to do very well compared to the smoke-free bars in Minnesota."