

// OUR SAY //

Legislature: Keep the smoking ban moving forward

Cancer survivor and seven-time Tour de France champion cyclist Lance Armstrong pedaled into Madison this week to push for a statewide **smoking ban**. Armstrong helped put the debate over ban legislation into sharp focus: It's a public health initiative deserving of one salient law uniformly clearing the air from Superior to Milwaukee.

The state legislature, now bordered by states with big bans on the books, needs to keep the Wisconsin-wide **smoking ban** legislation moving forward.

Armstrong spoke at a pro-state-ban rally near the State Capitol on Tuesday. His comments put political rancor and panic in their place: "The fight against cancer doesn't care if you're a Republican or you're a Democrat," Armstrong said, according to an Associated Press report. "It will attack anytime, anywhere, so that's why efforts like this have to be bipartisan."

The good news is, so far, it is. And it appears to be getting clearer and clearer that Wisconsin can do the right thing by approving a uniform ban getting rid of the confus-



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WORKPLACE SMOKING BAN REFERENDUM SUPPORTER DAN MORRISON of Appleton holds a sign outside Emmetts in Appleton, showing his support for an April 2006 referendum to relax a citywide workplace **smoking ban**. Appleton voters resoundingly rejected the attempt to overturn the city's workplace **smoking ban**. Municipal smoking bans vary in type and effect throughout the Fox Valley, Oshkosh and Fond du Lac, but a state-wide workplace ban is moving forward in the Wisconsin legislature.

ing, unfair patchwork of municipal bans that currently web the state and cause ugly rifts between determined business owners and health advocates.

The state Assembly's version of the statewide workplace **smoking ban** was blessed 6-3 in committee on Tuesday. The support came

from Democrats and Republicans. There's still a long way to go for the bill. Senate and Assembly leaders are demanding compromise is going to be essential for the bill to cross a finish line.

But a finish line is in sight, believe it or not.

It makes for a great sound bite

– no question about it – when Gov. Jim Doyle cites inaction here and Illinois and Minnesota statewide smoking bans rendering Wisconsin an "ashtray of the Midwest." But Doyle really can help his cause and the public health discussion by concentrating more on his unifier role, keeping legislators and residents focused on the two big goals: Improved public health and a fair, uniform law to end community-after-community divisions.

The mishmash of smoking bans through communities along our U.S. Highway 41 corridor alone should be strong motivation to get something uniform on the books in Madison.

There is absolutely no way Wisconsin would stand for a hodgepodge of municipal blood-alcohol-content standards, right? Imagine an Appleton where the limit was .10 and an Oshkosh where it was .08.

That's insane and unhealthy.

Armstrong's message and battle against cancer reminds a **smoking ban**-patchwork approach is dangerous in its own way.

Final Thought: Legislators, keep pushing for one clear, public health-focused, uniform statewide **smoking ban**.