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Editorial: Smoke-free in Wisconsin? Nope. Legislature caves, ignores public wishes
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Timid state lawmakers again seem unable to pass an indoor smoking ban in public places, including bars and restaurants. Neighboring states, including Minnesota and Illinois, have passed similar bans. With a progressive tradition, Wisconsin has somehow fallen behind on this important health issue.

Most state polls show support for such a ban. The Wisconsin Tavern League, however, has been a big opponent. Result: Big lobby beats little guy constituents.

In last week's Journal story, "Smoking law blows winds of change," some local restaurant owners expressed concern about a state smoking ban. They said it would harm bar business. Others said it overstepped government's role.

The harming business claim is dubious. States with smoking bans report no noticeable drop for most establishments. For some, it's even a plus.

That seems to be what the latest Journal online poll question shows. Perhaps to play up "no smoking" spurs a net increase of customers.

Here's what the online poll question asked: Would a statewide smoking ban in taverns make you MORE or LESS likely to patronize a bar?

As of Tuesday noon, local readers responded this way: 54% said MORE likely to patronize; 19% said LESS likely; and 28% said it would make NO DIFFERENCE either way.

The findings aren't scientific. But they may point to something: A smoking ban won't scare off most customers. In fact, it may draw more people who are repelled by tobacco smoke odor and avoid breathing carcinogenic air.