

---

**editorial**

---

# Time to get our heads out of the clouds (of **cigarette** smoke)

by Paul Mitchell  
Managing Editor

Arizona. California. Colorado. Connecticut. Delaware. Hawaii. Illinois. Maine. Maryland. Massachusetts. Minnesota. Montana. Nebraska. New Mexico. New York. Ohio. Oregon. Rhode Island. Utah. Vermont. Washington. Soon Iowa.

And now, most likely, Michigan.

What do these states have in common? Statewide bans on smoking in public places. Add to the list many states which have bans on smoking in places accessed by minors.

Michigan's State Senate approved a statewide **smoking ban** last week, and if the House goes along with it, the governor is expected to sign.

That means that Wisconsin would be surrounded on all sides by states which ban smoking in public places.

Instead of America's dairyland, our state could become known as the ashtray of the Midwest.

Studies have definitively proven that secondhand smoke is harmful to the health of even nonsmokers. Why, then, are our state legislators so afraid to pass a law which would ultimately protect the health of our children?

In the first 18 months after the town of Pueblo, Colo. enacted a **smoking ban** in 2003, hospital admissions for heart attacks decreased by 27 percent. Admissions in neighboring towns without smoking bans remained the same. Coincidence?

Studies in Scotland have shown that the health of employees in bars improved significantly after smoking bans were enacted.

If our state legislators fail to see the need to embrace this change, it would seem to be time for municipalities to step up to the plate.

Some already have. Appleton, Ashland, Beloit, Eau Claire, Fitchburg, Janesville, Kenosha, Madison, Menominee and Oshkosh all have some form of **smoking ban** in place.

Calling for such a ban in a tourist market like Hayward, however, is a tough sell, and I'm personally doubtful that it will happen. The ban needs to be statewide to be effective, and it needs to happen sooner rather than later.

Each year that smoking is allowed in public places, people suffer needless consequences.

Do we really want to live in America's ashtray? And should our children pay the price?