



Supporting Organizations

American Cancer Society

American Heart Association

American Lung Association

Association of Wisconsin Tourism Attractions

Smoke Free Wisconsin

Wisconsin Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau

Wisconsin Dells Visitor and Convention Bureau

Wisconsin Innkeepers Association

Wisconsin Medical Society

Wisconsin Restaurant Association

Wisconsin Tourism Federation

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Restaurants, Hospitality Groups and Public Health Groups Welcome Introduction of Breathe Free Wisconsin Act

MADISON – The organizations representing Wisconsin’s restaurants, its tourism industry and its hotels and inns – almost all of the state’s entertainment and hospitality industry – today joined the state’s public health groups to jointly applaud a bipartisan group of legislators for introducing the Breathe Free Wisconsin Act.

The bill protects everyone’s right to breathe clean indoor air – and not someone’s secondhand smoke - noted the group, which as of today includes the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, the Wisconsin Tourism Federation, the Wisconsin Innkeepers Association, the Wisconsin Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus, the Association of Wisconsin Tourism Attractions and the Wisconsin Dells Visitor and Convention Bureau.

Those groups have joined the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, SmokeFree Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Medical Society, which have formed the “It’s Time to Breathe Free” coalition to support the statewide legislation.

The bill requires that every indoor workplace and public place in Wisconsin become smoke-free, including all restaurants and bars.

The bill has broad support from both political parties, with sponsors including Sens. Fred Risser (D-Madison) and Carol Roessler (R-Oshkosh), and Reps. Steve Wieckert (R-Appleton), Mark Gottlieb (R-Port Washington), and Jon Richards (D-Milwaukee).

“The Wisconsin Restaurant Association strongly supports Senate Bill 150, which will create a smoke-free work environment for all workers in Wisconsin,” said Edward Lump, President & CEO of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, which represents over 16,000 restaurants and bars.

“With so many local ordinances throughout the state restricting smoking, a statewide ban with no exemptions is the only way to truly level the playing field and create a fair competitive environment for all businesses.”

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“We applaud the tremendous leadership of these legislators who are standing up for the health of everyone in Wisconsin,” said Maureen Busalacchi, executive director of Smoke Free Wisconsin, a coalition of healthcare and health advocacy organizations. “We all deserve the same basic right to be protected from secondhand smoke, and these legislators have stepped up to make smoke-free air a reality throughout Wisconsin.”

Secondhand smoke kills more people in Wisconsin than traffic accidents, according to the State Health Department. Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including at least 69 carcinogens. It is a proven cause of lung cancer, heart disease, and serious respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis and asthma.

If this legislation passes, Wisconsin would join 18 other states that have passed strong smoke-free laws that include restaurants and bars. Similar legislation has already passed the state Senates in both Illinois and Minnesota this year.

Busalacchi noted that the debate over secondhand smoke ended in June last year when U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona issued his report on the impact of secondhand smoke on America’s health. “The science is clear,” he said. “Secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance, but a serious health hazard that causes premature death and disease in children and nonsmoking adults.”

The effort to pass SB 150 is already underway. Today is the Wisconsin Restaurant Association’s lobby day, with restaurateurs descending on the capitol to push legislative support of the Breathe Free Wisconsin Act. A recent poll found that 64% of Wisconsinites favor such legislation, and Gov. Jim Doyle has made this issue a top legislative priority.

“There aren’t enough words of praise to acknowledge what these lawmakers from both parties as well as Gov. Jim Doyle have done to attempt to improve public health,” Busalacchi said.

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