



April 8, 2009

Our view: Smoking ban appeals to more people

A year after a citywide smoke-free law was approved by voters, even more city residents support it.

A recent poll conducted by The Mellman Group, found 77 percent of voters participating said they like the law that prohibits smoking by customers or employees in workplaces. When the ordinance passed a year ago, 64 percent of voters supported it.

The increase might be because people have found it more pleasant to dine at and visit businesses without breathing in second-hand smoke. Most non-smokers say they really notice a difference when they go to a bar or restaurant in another community where smoking is allowed. The ban has kept them closer to home where the air is easier to breathe. (That's one way to get people to "buy local.")

Businesses owners, specifically restaurant and tavern owners, likely don't favor the ban. They claim, and perhaps rightly so, that it has affected their business -- especially those places that catered to heavy smokers. For people who must smoke when they dine or drink, they've had to look outside the city limits for a place to visit.

Business owners should get behind the plan for a statewide smoking ban, to level the playing field for all businesses in Wisconsin. It would eliminate the boundary issue in Marshfield and remove the patchwork of laws being created as communities like Marshfield enact smoking bans.

This newspaper reported Dr. William Hocking, a Marshfield Clinic oncologist and hematologist, said the polling data coupled with the proven health risk involved with secondhand smoke, is evidence that a statewide smoking ban should be passed.

"As a doctor, and from a health care professional, it's hard to see any argument that holds water against passing a state law," he told a News-Herald reporter.

As it becomes more difficult to find places to smoke -- many businesses won't allow employees to smoke anywhere on their properties -- it might become an added incentive for people, especially young people, to not start and for long-term smokers to quit.

We know cigarette smoking is highly addictive. With an extra \$1.01 in federal taxes added onto the price last week, it's getting more costly to smoke. That doesn't begin to factor in the health-care costs associated with smoking.

The recent poll results show the law has gained supporters. A state-wide smoking ban is the next step.
