



May 11, 2009

Editorial: Pass compromise statewide smoking ban

The compromise proposal for a ban on smoking in the workplace in Wisconsin is a good one and should be approved by the Legislature this week.

By getting the Wisconsin Tavern League — which had long lobbied against the ban — on board, lawmakers have removed a substantial obstacle to this much-needed health and safety issue.

Tavern League opposition melted away when sponsors of the measure agreed to delay its start until July 2010. This gives all businesses time to prepare for it. The compromise also allows outdoor smoking areas that could not be banned by local ordinances. The only full exemption is for existing cigar bars and tobacco shops.

We've long favored a statewide ban on smoking in the workplace to protect people from the effects of secondhand smoke. Over the years, many businesses, including many bars and restaurants, have recognized the danger of smoking and banned it on their own.

Now everyone will be on a level playing field since the statewide ban will supersede the patchwork of local ordinances in effect in three dozen communities around the state.

Although proponents of the ban would have preferred that it take effect immediately, a 13-month delay is an acceptable trade-off and removed the opposition of the Tavern League.

In the end, the result will be that all workplaces in Wisconsin will be free of tobacco smoke — and that's the best result for everyone.
