

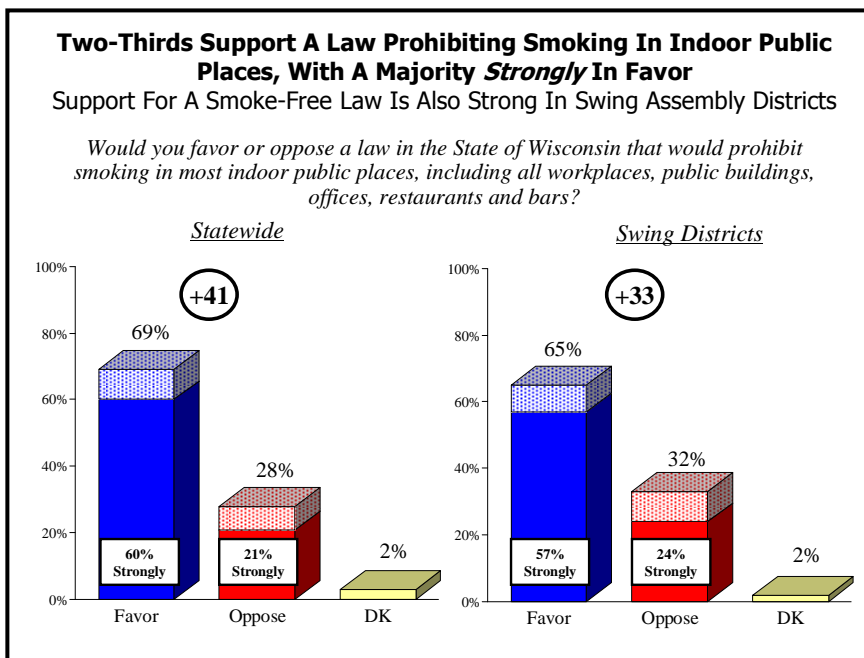


TO: The Breathe Free Wisconsin Coalition & The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
FROM: The Mellman Group (D) And Public Opinion Strategies (R)
RE: Smoke-Free Laws In Wisconsin
DATE: April 8, 2008

The Mellman Group and Public Opinion Strategies conducted a statewide survey of 700 voters in Wisconsin, which included an over-sample of 200 voters in “swing” Assembly Districts – defined as the 42 districts where the Democratic or Republican candidate averages no greater than 55% of the vote in competitive statewide elections. This produced a properly weighted statewide sample of 500. The poll was conducted by telephone March 12-16, and used a registration-based sample. The margin of error for this survey is +/-4.4% statewide and +/- 4.9% in “swing” Assembly Districts, at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error is larger for the subgroup.

Wisconsin Voters Strongly Support A Law To Prohibit Smoking In Most Indoor Public Places

Our recently completed poll shows strong and growing support among Wisconsin voters for a statewide law that would “prohibit smoking in most indoor public places, including all workplaces, public buildings, offices, restaurants and bars.” More than two-thirds (69%) favor the law, while only 28% oppose it. Moreover, support for the law is more intense than opposition. A large majority (60%) *strongly* favor the law, while only 21% *strongly* oppose it. Voters in “swing” Assembly districts (defined as those districts where the Democratic or Republican candidate averages no more than 55% of the vote in competitive statewide elections) also favor a smoke-free law by a wide margin, with 65% of voters favoring the smoke-free law and 32% opposing it.



The trend over time is toward increased support for a statewide smoke-free law. The number in favor has grown by 5 points since February of last year, while opposition has dropped by 6 points.

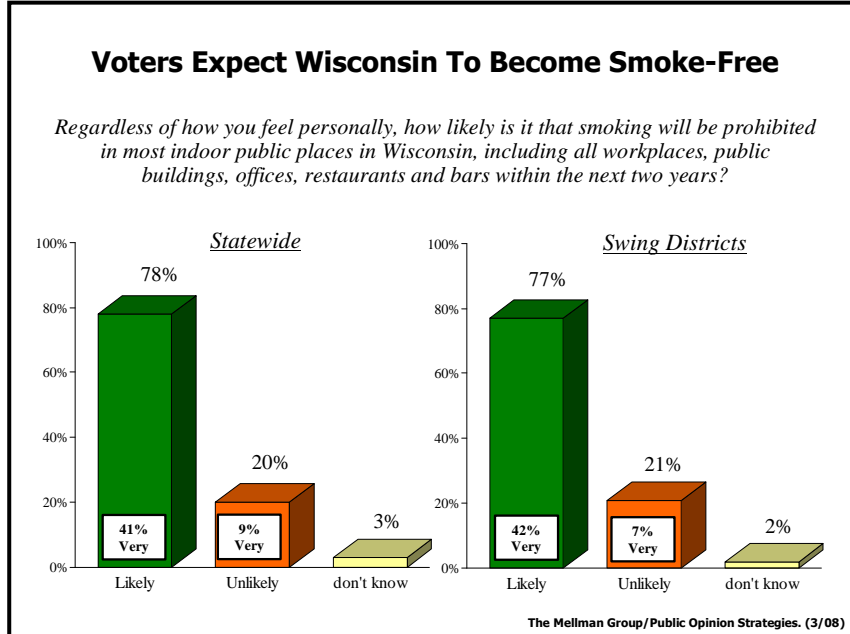
As the chart at right indicates, support for a clean indoor air law stretches across party lines, demographic groups, and is strong in all parts of the state. Democrats, independents and Republicans support the law by similar margins. Support is also very strong across gender, age, and education groups. Indeed, the proposed law garners exceptionally strong support among women, citizens in South-Central Wisconsin, and voters under 40.

In fact, opposition is not even that intense among the 21% of the electorate who say they are current or occasional smokers, with 45% of this group favoring the law and 49% opposing it. Their opposition is dwarfed by overwhelming support among the much

% Favor/Oppose Smoke-Free Law		
	Favor	Oppose
Men	58%	38%
Women	79%	20%
Democrat	73%	26%
Independent	65%	31%
Republican	68%	30%
18-39	70%	26%
40-59	68%	31%
60+	68%	31%
Milwaukee Co.	66%	32%
Milwaukee Suburbs	68%	30%
Madison/S. Central	85%	13%
Green Bay/Northeast	66%	29%
Wausau/N. Central	63%	36%
La Crosse/West	63%	33%
HS or Less	67%	32%
Some College	70%	27%
College Grad+	70%	28%

larger number of non-smokers, including former smokers (67% favor, 32% oppose), and those who have never smoked (79% favor, 20% oppose).

Smokers too are becoming more supportive of smoke-free laws. In our February 2007 survey, 64% of smokers opposed a smoke-free law, while today fewer than half (49%) take that position – a 15-point drop in opposition to the proposed law among smokers over the past year.



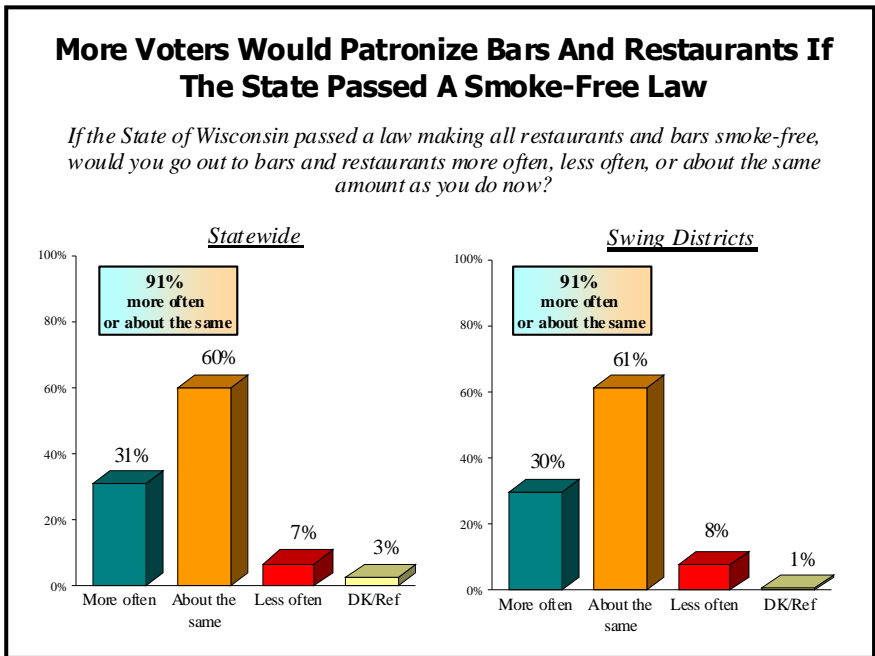
Most Expect A Smoke-Free Law To Be Adopted

Regardless of their perspective on the law, most Wisconsinites expect the state to become smoke-free in the near future. More than three-quarters of state voters (78%) believe that it is likely that “smoking will be prohibited in most indoor public places in Wisconsin, including all workplaces, public buildings, offices, restaurants and bars within the next two years,” while only 20% believe it is unlikely this will happen. In “swing” Assembly districts, nearly the same percentage of voters (77%) believe smoking will be prohibited. Interestingly, even among

current/occasional smokers, 72% believe it is likely that smoking will be prohibited in most indoor public places, while only 26% believe that this is unlikely to occur.

A Smoke-Free Law May Increase Restaurant And Bar Patronage

Contrary to the opinions expressed by some opponents of this law, there is evidence that a smoke-free law could actually increase patronage of restaurants and bars in Wisconsin. Nearly a third of voters (31%) said they would go to bars and restaurants more often if they were smoke-free, compared to only 7% who claimed they would go out less often. The results in “swing” districts are nearly identical with 30% saying they would patronize restaurants and bars more often if a smoke-free law was passed.



Voters Recognize The Dangers Of Secondhand Smoke And Believe The Right To Clean Air Trumps Smokers' Rights

Overwhelming support for a smoke-free law is a function of concerns about the dangers of secondhand smoke and the priority accorded to the rights of customers/employees over those of smokers. Overall, 84% of the state's voters believe secondhand smoke is at least a "moderate" health hazard, with a clear majority (57%) saying it constitutes a "serious health hazard." Only 13% believe secondhand smoke to be a "minor health hazard" or "not a health hazard at all."

Wisconsin voters also attach greater priority to the right to breathe clean air in restaurants and bars over the right of smokers to smoke inside those establishments. Seventy-three percent (73%) say "the rights of customers and employees to breathe clean air in restaurants and bars" takes precedence, while only 16% attach higher priority to "the rights of smokers to smoke inside restaurants and bars." Even a majority of smokers (51%) agree that the rights of customers and employees to breathe clean air in restaurants trump their right to smoke in restaurants and bars.

Voters Prefer Candidates Who Support Smoke-Free Laws

The intensity of support for a smoke-free law is further evident in the fact that Wisconsin voters say a candidate's position on this law will influence their votes. When asked how a candidate's position on the law would affect their vote, 60% of Wisconsin voters say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who "supports the state law that would prohibit smoking in most public places, including workplaces, public buildings, offices, restaurants and bars," while only 24% say they prefer a candidate who opposes the law. Once again, intensity favors the candidate who supports the law, as nearly half (49%) say they would be *much* more likely to vote for a supporter of the law, while only 14% say they would be *much* more likely to vote for an opponent of the law. In "swing" Assembly districts, 57% of voters say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports a smoke-free law, while only 27% say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who opposes it.

Wisconsin voters are also much more likely to support a candidate who advocates acting now to pass a smoke-free law rather than waiting until after other legislative priorities are addressed. After voters heard arguments espoused by two legislative candidates, one supporting immediate action because of the right of everybody to breathe clean air and the cancer causing chemicals in secondhand smoke, matched against one opposing legislation because the state has other priorities and has to ensure businesses aren't hurt as a result of the law, a clear 60% of voters, both statewide and in "swing" districts, agree with the candidate who wants to act now on a smoke-free law, while only 34% agree with the candidate who prefers to wait until other issues are dealt with. It should be noted that majorities of Democrats (66%) independents (57%) and Republicans (56%) all agree with arguments supporting immediate action to pass a smoke-free law.

