

Editorial: Smoking ban momentum growing

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The momentum is growing. It's time Wisconsin joined the groundswell.

The push for workplace smoking bans is increasing in states near and far. It's making sense to them from a public health standpoint. Secondhand smoke is a significant hazard.

It should make just as much sense to Wisconsin's Legislature, which should move forward on the bill by Rep. Steve Wieckert, R-Appleton, and Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, that would ban smoking statewide in indoor workplaces, including restaurants and bars.

Here's a rundown of the states that have recently taken action:

- Last week, Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed a bill that bans smoking in indoor public places and most places of employment, including restaurants and bars.
- The Illinois Legislature passed a bill that would ban smoking in all indoor workplaces statewide. Gov. Rob Blagojevich is expected to sign the bill.
- Oregon's state Senate passed an indoor workplace smoking ban, which now advances to the Assembly.
- Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley just signed a bill that prohibits smoking in any "indoor area open to the public" or indoor workplaces.
- Tennessee's state Senate passed a statewide smoking ban Thursday. Also supported by Gov. Phil Bredesen, the bill moves on to the Assembly.

In a question-and-answer session in today's paper, Wieckert said he's hoping this bill will get a committee hearing next week. That's the next step in the process.

But it shouldn't be the last step. It's time for legislators to act on behalf of citizens' health by instituting a ban.

Nearly half of the states have decided the same thing. Others are debating it.

Its time has come in Wisconsin.