

Editorial: No butts about it

Banning smoking at entrances to Waukesha County facilities makes sense.

Better sense would be a statewide ban on smoking in public places.

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If this keeps up, pretty soon the only place smokers will be allowed to indulge their habit will be in the privacy of their own homes - and that's a good thing. Smoking is bad for you and, according to the studies, for those around you. Keeping it out of public places is simply good public health policy.

Which is why the public should welcome Waukesha County Executive Dan Vrakas' proposal to ban smoking anywhere within 40 feet of any entrance to the Waukesha County Courthouse and other county facilities. And why the Waukesha County Board should approve the proposal as soon as possible.

Waukesha County isn't alone; officials in Racine and Milwaukee counties are considering similar restrictions. It's all part of a growing trend to limit smoking in public places. The best answer is a statewide ban on smoking in public facilities, but that still leaves the matter of those unsavory and unhealthy clouds outside that residents have to run through to get to government offices.

The problem Vrakas is trying to address is familiar to most people: Smokers banned from indoor facilities grab a cigarette on their break or lunch hour and hang out at entrances to buildings. After Waukesha County initiated a new security system and restricted the number of entrances to the courthouse, more complaints started coming in about smokers near the entrances.

Vrakas' 40-foot ban is aimed at serving the public. But it doesn't come without help for smokers. To his credit, Vrakas also announced a new seven-week smoking cessation program run by the American Lung Association to help smokers kick the habit.

Other officials weighing similar restrictions should follow Waukesha County's lead and consider providing similar help for smokers.