

## Editorial: Statewide smoking ban must be comprehensive

The tide is continuing to turn: Wisconsin should have a statewide workplace smoking ban.

Senate Bill 150, which would do just that, is steadily gaining supporters, with Assembly Speaker Mike Huebsch, R-West Salem, being the latest heavy hitter to get on board. The Wisconsin Restaurant Association already has endorsed a ban, and the Wisconsin Tourism Federation has joined the team as well.

Gov. Jim Doyle also has supported the ban, which would forbid smoking in most enclosed locations, including bars and restaurants.

One staunch opponent of the concept is the Tavern League, a lobbying power that represents 13,000 bar owners across Wisconsin.

Its members are OK with a ban, provided it doesn't apply to them. Banning smokers from their establishments, they say, would substantially hurt their businesses.

But making that exemption, or any others, would undermine the entire point of a statewide ban, which is to create the "level playing field" that bar owners in municipalities with smoking bans — like Appleton — have been asking for.

Doyle has left open the possibility of negotiating such an exemption, a tactic we oppose. A statewide smoking ban, at this point, would really only affect bars and restaurants, bringing them into line with the majority of indoor locations in Wisconsin. A ban that doesn't include them doesn't do much of anything.

State lawmakers should keep the ball rolling and get their fellow legislators to understand the importance of this bill. It not only addresses the obvious health risks associated with smoking and secondhand smoke, but relieves the economic burden on cities like Appleton and Madison that face a disadvantage to neighboring cities because they made the (correct) decision to ban workplace smoking.

The bill's sponsor in the Democrat-controlled Senate is Fred Risser, a Democrat from Madison. With Huebsch — and Appleton's Republican state Rep. Steve Wieckert — behind it in the Republican-controlled Assembly, the proposal's chances are improving.

The Legislature and Doyle should resist the urge to capitulate to Tavern League pressure and provide a fair environment for Wisconsin businesses across the board.

If they do consider negotiating, they should remember Wieckert's succinct response when asked if an exemption for bars would be OK:

"One-word answer: no."