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Editorial: Smoke must have affected Breske's brain

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You didn't think you would get away that easily, did you?

It has been a pretty pleasant winter, what with the nice blanket of snow and reasonable temperatures. You might even have been fooled into thinking spring was in the air when the mercury edged above 40 degrees Monday.

But all that pleasantness vanished Tuesday when Mother Nature roared back into town, dumping sideways snow on the city as the wind whipped and temps plunged.

School officials sent kids home early Tuesday and said, "Don't come back."

That left parents scrambling to figure out what to do with the little monsters.

But we've recovered now -- back to normal weather, with spring break calling.

Before you break out the sunscreen and buy tickets for Cancun, spend some time with some other events of the week that you might have missed when it was too cold to go outside and retrieve the newspaper:

It's fine that state Sen. Roger Breske disagrees with a proposal to ban smoking in all Wisconsin workplaces. The Eland-area Democrat, former bar owner and ex-president of the state Tavern League has made his feelings on this measure clear over the years.

But he should have left it at that -- said it was a policy disagreement and moved on. Instead, he opened his mouth this week to explain his opposition and revealed himself to be a simpleton.

Overwhelming scientific evidence has demonstrated that secondhand smoke causes myriad health problems -- from cancer and emphysema to aggravations of asthma and heart disease.

But Breske, who worked in a smoky bar starting when he was a child, doesn't buy the science.

"It's hogwash," he said. "I'm still alive."

That's some rock solid logic, Roger.

A few weeks ago, a window washer named Alcides Moreno fell from the 47th floor of a New York skyscraper -- and survived. By Breske's thinking, that means we all should feel free to jump from 500 feet up.

After all, Moreno is alive, right, senator?

Let's hope the senator uses more brain power in formulating his other legislative positions. Or that voters use theirs when they cast their next ballots.

It's easy today to feel as though our voices are lost in the clamor that seems to surround us during every waking moment.

From talk radio to blogs to e-mail spam to the loudmouth blowhard in the next office cubicle, we're deafened by the daily din.

The Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service is trying to give you your voice back. The institute, based at the University of Wisconsin Marathon County, intends to hold a series of community conversations in coming months so that people can speak their minds on issues of the day.

Director Eric Giordano is jumping in with both feet by kicking off the series Monday with a discussion about immigration.

It's a complex issue that stirs passions and prejudices. We're economically dependent upon the 14 million undocumented workers estimated to be in the country. But we can't condone the presence of people who arrived here by breaking the law.

The nine townhall meetings between now and the end of March surely won't resolve the issue, and they're not intended to. They're meant to bring people together so they can talk and better understand the complexities of the topic.

That's a laudable goal. We hope everyone tries to make it to at least one of the gatherings.