



# PIERCE COUNTY HERALD

Your online link to Pierce County, Wisconsin

## **Editorial: A smokeless state**

*Pierce County Herald - 10/11/2007*

Wisconsin residents are surrounded by a threat to their health as well as some potential for it to be banned.

The threat is secondhand smoke, which state residents can encounter in their workplaces and other public settings, if not in their own homes. With its hazards proven, smoke-free laws covering restaurants and bars have already been enacted in 22 states, but not in America's Dairyland.

It's high time that situation changed. A statewide poll conducted earlier this year by the Mellman Group and Public Opinion Strategies found 64 percent of state occupants support a law making not only restaurants and bars smoke-free, but all workplaces, too.

Neighboring Minnesota is among the 22 states having such a law. Minnesota's enactment of a comprehensive law might provide just the impetus for Wisconsin to follow suit. With it, a majority of the U.S. population now lives in states and localities where the public can patronize restaurants and bars without being subjected to the effects of secondhand smoke.

This smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including 69 known to cause cancer, according to information from the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association and American Heart Association. Chemicals in secondhand smoke include formaldehyde, cyanide, arsenic, carbon monoxide, methane, benzene and radioactive polonium 210.

The chief opposition to enacting these bans has come from the hospitality industry. But as more smoke-free laws have been implemented, it's been shown the laws protect health without harming business. The Surgeon General has concluded, "Evidence from peer-reviewed studies shows that smoke-free policies and regulations do not have an adverse impact on the hospitality industry."

Several individual communities which have passed their own similar laws indicate successes. After implementation of a smoke-free ordinance there in July of 2005, an economic and health analysis done by the Madison City Clerk Office found the number of liquor-licensed establishments increased by more than seven percent. Madison also saw a three percent increase in its average monthly employment rate 18 months after implementation. Meantime in Appleton, where a smoke-free law was introduced in July 2005, a study by a UW cancer center found significantly fewer respiratory problems in bartenders working in smoke-free bars.

Supporters outnumbered opponents by more than two-to-one at a hearing for a smoke-free bill in the Badger state. The sentiments about secondhand smoke here are as clear as the air will be if the bill passes.