



# Should smoking be banned in bars, taverns and gaming clubs?

A smoking ban has been in effect at all California bars, taverns and gaming clubs since January 1. Assembly Bill 13 prohibits patrons and employees from smoking in these venues, and owners who allow smoking can be fined up to \$500 per offense. Customers also face fines. Proponents say the law was intended to protect employees and patrons from the hazards of second-hand smoke. According to the American Lung Association, bar and tavern employees have more lung cancer and heart disease than those in any other occupation. Opponents argue that the smoking ban has had a devastating financial effect on bar and tavern owners, and has also led to customer complaints and fights, employee layoffs and fewer tips for workers. What do you think?



MYNARCZYK

## NO

Once a safe haven for smokers, bars, taverns and gaming establishments have increasingly become the targets of anti-smoker/anti-business activists. In their zeal to achieve a new Prohibition, they have destroyed many a small business and have trampled upon cherished and uniquely American principles of freedom and individual rights.



Mike Hambrick  
NSA

An unusually punitive smoking ban is now the law of the land in California. As of January 1 of this year, smoking is outlawed in all free-standing bars, taverns and cocktail lounges,

cigar bars, private club bars and restaurant bars, as well as gaming establishments and bingo halls.

State officials believe they know better how to run businesses than do the owners."

Business owners statewide have experienced lost revenues ranging from 20

percent to 80 percent. Employees have been laid off, and establishments have been forced out of business. Businesses have been targeted for sting operations by undercover officers, and bar owners and their employees are facing citations and court dates. All because state officials believe they know better how to run businesses than do the owners.

Individuals pushing smoking bans like the one in California claim to be protecting employees from environmental tobacco smoke

(ETS), despite the fact that the evidence of harm from ETS is far too thin and unsettled to support such sweeping public policy changes. The fact is that the business community will respond to the marketplace and arrive at the right decisions without government intrusion. Business owners have and will continue to create non-smoking bars and taverns to meet market demand, just as they created separate smoking sections to accommodate the interests of both their smoking and non-smoking customers.

In Spokane, Washington, business owners worked with health professionals and government officials to come up with an innovative sign program that lets customers know up front the smoking policy of each establishment.

"...[S]olutions can happen without government always having the last word," commented the president of the Spokane Restaurant & Hospitality Association. The program has been so successful that several communities nationwide are considering similar programs as an alternative to total bans.

The free market is a wonderful instrument that rewards business owners who make smart and innovative decisions to meet the demands of their customers. Protecting that instrument from the intrusive hand of the government is a goal we all should work to achieve. **B**

Mike Hambrick is a senior vice president with the National Smokers Alliance in Alexandria, Virginia.

## YES

Health laws govern many areas of our lives. We wouldn't think of allowing dairy or meat products to have different refrigeration standards because they are used in a bar or bar/restaurant facility. Nor should we allow a known Group "A" carcinogen such as secondhand smoke, similar to asbestos and radon, to be ignored in these enclosed workplaces. Secondhand smoke is responsible for killing more than 53,000 people in this country yearly. In addition to the personal anguish this causes, California taxpayers carry the extra burden for the medically uninsured individuals whose health is compromised by secondhand smoke.



Dian Kiser  
BREATH

Bars, taverns, gaming clubs and restaurants with bars employ nearly 850,000 Californians. These individuals deserve

the same protection from secondhand smoke that other California workers currently receive. There are several important reasons why enclosed workplace environments must be smoke-free. First, protecting the health of employees is critical and bar owners have a common-law duty to provide a safe and smoke-free workplace. Second, bar owners face a significant liability risk if they fail to protect their employees from the hazards

A recent statewide poll revealed that 85 percent of bar patrons either prefer or are happy with smoke-free bars."

## VIRTUAL DEBATE

For more information on this topic you can find our debaters online:

National Smokers Alliance:  
<http://www.smokersalliance.org>

BREATH—The California Smoke-Free Bar Program:  
<http://www.ips.net/breath>

Legislative information on the Internet:  
<http://www.sen.ca.gov>

You can find past Debates and feedback at Costco Online:  
<http://www.costco.com/>

## RESULTS

### Member response to the July Debate:

*Should the federal government increase its investment to improve child-care services?*

**18% YES      82% NO**

of secondhand smoke exposure.

Some owners of small bars have been concerned about the possible loss of revenue from becoming smoke-free. However, the California State Board of Equalization in their most recent report for the month of January 1998 shows that sales tax revenues for the smallest bars are up 1.6 percent over the same month in 1997. This should not be a surprise since 82 percent of Californians do not smoke.

In survey after survey, the vast majority of bar patrons in our state have indicated it is important to have a smoke-free environment. A recent statewide poll revealed that 85 percent of bar patrons either prefer or are just as happy with smoke-free bars. They realize they are only being asked to step outside to smoke.

Clearly, Californians understand the well-documented health risks and deadly consequences that come with secondhand smoke. But Californians are also aware of the tobacco industry and its tobacco industry front groups who have made numerous efforts to overturn smoke-free workplace laws. The tobacco industry has tried to confuse the public by calling smoke-free workplace laws "rights issues" when, in fact, they are health issues. Organizations such as the American Lung Association are deeply concerned about secondhand smoke. The tobacco industry cares not a breath for the health of Californians. ☐

*Dian Kiser is Director of BREATH—The California Smoke-Free Bar Program, in Sacramento, California.*

## MEMBERS SPEAK ON:

### Should smoking be banned in bars, taverns and gaming clubs?

#### Yes.

Cigarettes are declared to be harmful and second-hand smoke is said to be worse. The Surgeon General and most insurance companies are against smoking, period.



Alfred M. Boyd  
Baltimore, MD

#### No.

Each person has a right to choose to smoke or not to smoke. Smoking in bars and taverns comes with the territory. If a person doesn't like to smoke, or breathe secondhand smoke, they shouldn't go to bars and taverns.



Debbie Johnson  
Henderson, NV

#### Yes.

Smoking is the number-one cause of lung cancer. It's also a stinky habit for smokers and for those who have to breathe it second-hand. I'm against smoking at any public place, including bars, taverns, clubs or restaurants.



Eva Mandel  
N. Woodmere, NY

#### No.

It's wrong to dictate personal behavior that does not involve the use of illegal substances. Besides, secondhand smoke has never actually been proven to be hazardous to others.



Laurence Crocker  
Eureka, CA

#### Yes.

Secondhand smoke has serious side effects on non-smokers. All employees have a basic right to work in a smoke-free, healthy environment.



Tamara Nikradse  
Wellesley, MA

#### No.

It's an unfair law. It discriminates against both business owners and the many patrons that frequent these establishments to exercise their right to smoke.



William R. Houck  
Carlsbad, CA

*Opinions expressed are those of the individuals or organizations represented and are presented to foster discussion.*

*Costco and The Costco Connection take no position on any Debate topic.* 2 of 2

## Express Your View

### Should smoking be banned in bars, taverns and gaming clubs?

YES       NO

Comments:

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Name

Business Name

City/State/Zip

Date

Signature

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or respond through our Web site at  
<http://www.costco.com>  
(Please, include your name and address with your e-mail.)

### Results in the next issue

Do you have a Debate topic suggestion?  
We'd like to hear from you. Just drop us a note by fax, e-mail or regular mail at the addresses above.

Suggestions:

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