

Seattle P.I. 12/4/86

Smoking ban may be ignited early

By Dan Coughlin
P-I Reporter

A King County Council committee yesterday moved up the date on which county employees and their visitors would be prohibited from smoking in the courthouse and 57 other county-controlled buildings.

As originally proposed, the ban would have begun Jan. 4, 1988, but the council's Operations, Judiciary and Human Services committee voted to move the date up to July 1 of next year.

The committee, in its endorsement of the proposed ban, said enforcement would be up to elected officials. But nobody could be fired for violating the prohibition under the ordinance as it is now written.

The measure still has to be approved by the full council.

Eldon Bell, a county right-of-way agent, argued employees should be fired if they refuse to quit smoking.

"You should treat violators like any other drug addict," he said.

Committee members yesterday agreed that details of the smoking ban are subject to union negotiations and that non-union employees may petition for an exemption.

The action came despite an objection from Myra Romans, executive director of an organization known Fresh Air for Non-smokers, who said even limited exemptions should not be granted.

"Everyone's health is at stake. You are abrogating your responsibility if you establish exemptions," she said.

However, Wyman Alston Jr., business representative of the Professional and Technical Engineers Local 17 and a member of an employee committee proposing the ban, told the committee that negotiations are required.

"We can't turn our backs on smokers, even if they are in the minority," he said.

Smoking ban eyed in county offices

by Bob Lane
Times staff reporter

A King County Council committee is proposing a law that would ban smoking in all county offices and workplaces by July 1.

Smoking has been unlawful in public areas of county buildings for some time.

But on a 3-2 vote yesterday, the Health Committee recommended an ordinance that would extend the smoking ban to all places in county buildings — except the jail and the Cedar Hills Alcoholism Treatment Center.

The ordinance, to be considered by the full council Monday, has no teeth, however. It specifies that an employee cannot be fired or suspended for violating the ban.

Nevertheless, council members Gary Grant and Cynthia Sullivan refused to support the ban because it had not been negotiated with labor unions representing county workers.

Two other sections of the proposed law would weaken its effect, said Myra Romans, executive director of Fresh Air for Non-Smokers, FANS.

They would allow consideration of an exception if the smoking ban created "unique" situations with some employees. Those situations were not spelled out.

The proposed law excused the jail and alcoholism treatment center only until County Executive Tim Hill's staff could work out a plan for ending smoking in those places as well. The ordinance also would require the county to pay for classes that would help employees to stop smoking.

Wayman Alston, business representative for Local 17, Professional and Technical Engineers, said the county should find a way to accommodate longtime employees who smoke.

TNWL 0028349