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## Bill to ban smoking in Illinois introduced

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SPRINGFIELD – Saying secondhand smoke kills an average of eight Illinoisans a day, a coalition of lawmakers and public health groups on Thursday backed new legislation to make the entire state smoke-free.

The bill, SB500, would ban smoking in all Illinois workplaces and indoor public areas, including bars, restaurants, casinos and bowling alleys.



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"It's time to stop the needless suffering and devastation caused by secondhand smoke by giving everyone the right to breathe clean air," said Clement Rose, a physician and president of the American Cancer Society in Illinois.

As an example, supporters pointed to Lisa Cristia, a nonsmoking Chicagoan who said she developed severe throat and tongue cancer after several years working in bars and restaurants where smoking was permitted. She ended up losing a large portion of her tongue, and had to relearn how to talk, eat and even breathe.

"I am a victim of second-hand smoke," Cristia said at a statehouse news conference on Thursday. "I am a victim of the occupational hazard of the dangers of working in the hospitality industry."

Dozens of countries and 16 states have already enacted workplace smoking bans, according to the bill's chief sponsor, state Sen. John Cullerton, D-Chicago. If they can do it, Illinois can and should do it too, he said.

But passage is far from assured. A similar proposal failed to make much progress in the last General Assembly. The state did, however, enact laws allowing municipal smoking bans and permitting counties to ban smoking in unincorporated areas. The result has been a patchwork of different regulations and complaints from businesses where nonsmoking communities border areas without smoking bans. Cullerton said a statewide ban would "level the playing field" and solve that problem.

So far, there are 36 cities and two counties in Illinois with smoking bans, with four more on the way. Urbana banned smoking in restaurants and non-bar workplaces this summer, and bars became subject to the ban on Jan. 1. Smoking will be cut off in Champaign's bars and restaurants at the end of this month. There is no such ban in Danville, but a city council subcommittee began discussing the issue last week.

Steve Riedl, executive director of the Illinois Licensed Beverage Association, said local bans are hurting hospitality industry businesses in those communities, despite claims to the contrary from smoke-free

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18°

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Tue	Wed	Thu
25	34	36

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supporters.

"We have lots of people who are on the brink of bankruptcy right now," Riedl said.

While a statewide ban may help level the playing field for businesses in the middle of the state, it could be a serious problem for border communities like Danville, he warned.

"Half of Illinois residents live within 45 miles of a state border. That's one of the reasons a statewide ban isn't the utopia they make it out to be," he said.

Another problem is that adults who want to drink and smoke at the same time aren't all just giving up the habit. According to Riedl, many are simply doing so at home, even converting their garages into places where they can smoke, drink and watch the game with friends.

At the same time, nonsmokers haven't exactly been flooding into local bars and restaurants to make up the difference, he said. In the end, business will still be down significantly, whether the establishment is under a local ban or a statewide one, Riedl said.

Unless there is an exemption for bars, fraternal lodges and bowling center lounges, the association will "fight tooth and nail" against a statewide ban, he said.

Similar battles are likely to continue at the local level as well. On Thursday, the Illinois Department of Public Health announced a \$100,000 grant to the University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs' to promote smoke-free legislation in counties and cities.

"The grant has three parts," said Tom Krawczyk from the institute's Center for Prevention Research and Development. "The first part is studying how it's been done so far, and then offering these symposia where we can share those lessons learned with communities who are thinking about it. The third part is offering technical assistance where we help them through the process."

The regional seminars Krawczyk mentioned will be held in southern Illinois and Springfield during February, and in Chicago in April.

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