



FLOOR MEMO

DATE: May 12, 2009
TO: All Legislators and Staff
FROM: Pete Hanson, Director of Government Relations
RE: Wisconsin Restaurant Association supports “the deal” on smoke-free air

On behalf of our 7000 member establishments, I would like to express the Wisconsin Restaurant Association’s strong support of the deal reached between the Tavern League of Wisconsin and smoke-free proponents on a statewide workplace smoking ban.

This deal is represented by SSA 1 to Senate Bill 181 and ASA 1 to Assembly Bill 253. We ask for your support of this substitute amendment and on final passage. WRA is not supporting other amendments that could potentially weaken the bill or scuttle the fragile deal that exists in the substitute amendment.

Here are some of the reasons our members support the deal:

- The hodgepodge of local bans will be over, and the competitive disparities between businesses in neighboring communities will end.
- It covers all workplaces with no significant exceptions, and it goes into effect for all restaurants and taverns on the same day. This represents a level playing field in the hospitality industry, for all practical purposes.
- The date the law will go into effect will be July 5, 2010. Delayed implementation will give restaurants and taverns time to adjust their business plans, build a patio area for smokers, or even go smoke-free ahead of the crowd to try to grab non-smoking customers before their competitors do.
- Owners and employees of restaurants and taverns will no longer be subjected to an unhealthy environment, breathing toxic air for 8-12 hours per day. We believe our workers deserve a healthy work environment, just like workers in factories, offices and all other workplaces.
- Smoking will be allowed in outdoor areas at every restaurant and tavern, and municipalities will not be allowed to ban smoking in those areas.
- Establishments will be able to create sheltered outdoor smoking areas, or keep the sheltered outdoor smoking areas they already have, in most cases. In our experience, establishments that talk to their customers in advance, and make outdoor accommodations for smokers, have a smooth transition to a smoke-free environment.

WRA members ask you to support smoke-free workplaces and support the smoke-free “deal,” contained in ASA 1 to AB 253, and SSA 1 to SB 181.