

Smoking bans in restaurants

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Restaurant goers make decisions that effect their overall satisfaction in an establishment every time they go out. They have to decide if they want their steak cooked medium-well or rare, if they want a Budweiser or a Bud-light, and if they want to start a tab or pay in cash. So what do all these decisions have in common? They have the freedom to choose what they want. So, why is it that we don't have a choice when the decision is whether or not we can smoke in public? You may think this seems like a complaint on the behalf of customers who smokes. But, in fact, it is the complaint of a non-smoker. Non-smokers have no choice in whether they are surrounded by people who smoke or not when they are at a bar or restaurant. Other customers, who don't smoke, really can't decide for the guy smoking next to them as to whether or not he will light one up. Without smoking bans in every bar and restaurant, non-smokers don't have any freedom of choice whatsoever. Big Tobacco companies say that enforcing an absolute smoking ban in the hospitality industry will spoil food sales in restaurants and drain alcohol sales in Bars. In this paper, I will show how smoking bans do not affect the hospitality industry at all and, in fact, the only business that would suffer is the tobacco industry. There is nothing worse then having your personal freedom of choice be taken away from you, that is to say, when you come home from a bar and your clothes smell like a dirty ash tray because they have been doused with the stench of smoke all in part by the friendly smoker. A lot of you are asking " Why do I have to I have to put of with this?" Most non-smokers are not the type that really get in your face and or tell you to go outside to smoke because there are so many people that smoke in bars compared to people who don't. An estimated 1. 28 billion people smoke

world wide, which is about a third of the total global population. (World Health Organization) Hypothetically though, let's say that that the one third of the population who smoke are so addicted that they would actually choose not to go to a restaurant where there is a smoking ban and they can not smoke. For every one smoker that a business might lose then, they stand to gain two nonsmokers in return. So there is no logic in saying that businesses are going to be hurt by a smoking ban. Most of the false claims about the hospitality industry being hurt by smoking bans are concocted by tobacco companies. (Druce 7) Contrary to what tobacco proponent's claim, smoke free ordinances and state laws have been implemented without a loss in sales for restaurants and bars. (Mykeitun 71) One restaurant owner stated "Smokers do not quit eating at their favorite restaurant, they quite smoking at it!" (Bill 14) So how come it is not even a consideration for a total smoking ban in America right now? A smoker can still go to the same bar and restaurant and choose to smoke, but rather go outside instead of inside where it will be an effect on the surrounding customers evening. It seems that business owners would be in favor of this ban by now, but they're not. Besides the obvious reason for not wanting to smell like smoke at a bar, there are also unsettling health issues that are involved with second-hand smoke that people inhale. Restaurant environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) is about 35 times higher in a bar or restaurant than a typical work place exposure due to the concentration of smoke from workers and patrons. (World Health Organization) Also, restaurant air contains six times the carbon monoxide that you would inhale standing in the middle of a California freeway. Bar owners who have multiple layers of ETS should also be

concerned because these are " class action law suits" waiting to happen. These statistics make you wonder if business owners are more concerned about their sales or the health of their customers. Let's say that a customer repeatedly has gotten sick from food poisoning at a restaurant, do you think they would eventually decide to stop going to that establishment? Yes. Then would a customer return to an establishment that runs the risk of causing smoke related sickness, or even some type of diseases? NO! In the long run bars and restaurants will lose that 2/3 of the population that doesn't smoke because customers will decide to quit going. Business owners also should be concerned with the health of their employees. Restaurant and bar employees are so heavily exposed to second hand smoke that a single night of inhaling all the second hand smoke is equivalent to smoking one to two packs a day. (Bignold 26) It makes sense financially to not expose employees and customers to smoke too. Owners would save money on cleaning and maintenance costs as well as insurance costs that are attached to any business that deals with such fire hazards as cigarettes. A study also showed that employee absenteeism was reduced in cities that had smoking bans in effect. (Gunn 14) So, obviously businesses will be reducing costs in certain places with a smoking ban in effect, but have bars actually been able to prove a loss in sales due to the bans? One bar owner claimed it lost \$30, 000 in a single month following a smoking ban in its city. A tavern owner of 27 year said he had to close down his business after the state passed a smoking legislation to ban smoking in all places in California. (Gunn 13) But can these losses really be linked to the smoking bans? At the time of both of these incidents stated above, the economy was on a decline and the Blood Alcohol

Content level (BAC) for drunk drivers was also reduced from 1 to .08. These are just two of the many factors that need to be concerned in order to present a more definite solution to the question of why business lost so much profit at this particular time. I believe if the government would play a bigger role in putting the smoking bans into effect few businesses would link lost profit to the effect of smoking bans. The Health and Safety Commission regulates the safety of food and drugs why not regulate the clean air in Bars and restaurants? If there was a total smoking ban regulated by the government, there would be no reason for profit loss because smokers would not pick and choose which bar to go to because all bars and restaurants would all have a smoking ban. Hospitality studies have shown that there is a slight decline in sales at the beginning when a smoking ban has just been enacted, but they tend to level off and even rise back to normal standards later on. When California enacted the nation's first state wide smoking ban in 1998, many smokers and owners of bars expected businesses to close and revenues to plummet. Since the initial drop in revenues when the ban first took place, overall revenue in California has grown steadily each year. Business owners have adopted to anti-smoking laws by creating "smoking porches" so customers who smoke will be protected from bad weather when they go outside to smoke. If the government were to pass this nation wide smoking ban, like most of Europe has done, then businesses would not have to worry about there individual markets being hurt. All restaurants would have to follow the same rules and codes and there would then be no excuses from owners that lose a customer to another business anymore. More than a dozen countries in Europe have instituted smoking bans in local bars and

taverns for quite some time now, and have found there to be no loss in business. Just recently the prime minister of Britain, Tony Blair, issued the first ever chain of smoke free restaurants. (Bennett 2) Guests and employees have found it quite refreshing to not have to endure the stench of smoke from previous guests. Across the way, in Ireland, locals have grown accustomed to the nation wide smoking ban. When Ireland became the first nation in the world to ban smoking it had the locals fuming about the new law. (Gunn 13) Having a cigarette, while drinking in their favorite local pub, is part of Ireland's culture; more so than Americans, to say the least. So you can understand why the Irish went hysterical when the smoking ban was enacted. Unlike a warm tropical climate like Miami, Florida, Ireland has a freezing cold climate subject to rain and snow all the time, which makes it difficult for customers to go outside and have a smoke. So why would such a country with a history and culture of smoking and drinking enact a smoking ban? Because local officials were concerned with the major health issues that the Irish people were facing due to the excessive smoking such as lung cancer and emphysema. Government officials are not taking this ban lightly either. If caught and charged with smoking inside a bar or tavern, the defendant could face up to a \$3, 500 fine and having their picture publicly displayed on local transportation buses accusing them of breaking the law. Over 10, 000 pubs have complained they have lost substantial business due to the ban and expect to lose more when winter sets in. Health officials claim that this can be directly linked to the smoking bans. Owners must first make an effort to accommodate smokers (i. e. smoking porches, outdoor heaters, etc.) before they start to complain that they have lost business due to the

ban. Studies have found that international tourism and hotel revenues have actually risen since 2003 in Europe. Why? Because tourists find that going out to local bars and restaurants in a different country is more enjoyable if there is no smoke. So, locals may claim they have seen a slight drop in revenue due to the ban, but the smoking ban is a rule for the majority of people, not the minority. Owners will see that people's fondness for drinking heavily outweighs their need to smoke. I believe that the smoking ban will be good for the U. S. and the rest of the world for that matter. It shows that we are moving to a healthier lifestyle and given a chance, it will greatly help our overall well being. It has succeeded in Europe, regardless of what the critics say. It has been enacted in larger states such as California and New York and has also done well. Critics have compared this ban to the alcohol prohibition, but it is not a total outlaw of smoking like alcohol was. Smokers are still allowed to smoke in bars, just outside. I think that if given a chance, people will see that this ban is intended to help businesses and its customers, not hurt them.