

# Cigarette ban: a case to consider essay example

[Health & Medicine](#), [Alcoholism](#)



In a perfect world, everyone is in perfect health. No one has the need to consume intoxicants. No one smokes. No one drinks. The only TV people watch is educational programming. No one consumes unhealthy food. No one even gets angry. It is fine to imagine such a world, but this is not grounded in reality, but rather the imagination. The legislators proposing an outright ban on smoking may have the interest of citizen's health in mind, but they do not have individual freedoms in mind. Nor does such a law take into account basic facts about human nature that make such a law impractical.

Such a law that would ban smoking for citizens under the argument that it is better for their health is based on perfectionist principles. Perfectionism according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy has a variety of meanings. Philosophers such as Aristotle, Spinoza, Marx, and T. H. Green could all be considered perfectionist philosophers in the broad definition of the term. Generally speaking, perfectionists " advance an objective account of the good and then develop an account of ethics and/or politics that is informed by this account of the good" (Wall, 1).

As objectivists, perfectionists elevate their own beliefs over others. This line of thought can lead lawmakers into deciding that even if the public is against a certain law in a democracy, that lawmakers still have a moral responsibility to enact it for the greater good of the people. It is a known fact that smoking is bad for an individual's health (betobaccofree, 1). However, there are plenty of things that are unhealthy for an individual that are legal to do and would be difficult to legislate.

Not getting exercise is unhealthy, so can a state pass a law forcing people to

exercise? Stress is also bad for a person's health, and a person's perspective affects stress, yet no law could feasibly address this. Other intoxicants such as alcohol are bad for the health and prohibition made a failed attempt at restricting it.

Though second hand smoke indoors can negatively affect the health of non-smokers, smoking for the most part does not cause harm to those choosing to smoke. Banning smoking undermines the right of a person to have autonomy and make his or her own choices. Like prohibition before it, it may carry with it a host of negative backlash, such as black markets for tobacco and the sort of organized crime that goes along with black markets.

Finally, this law denies important aspects of human nature. Almost every culture uses one form of intoxicant or another. Be it tobacco, alcohol marijuana, caffeine, or mate—intoxication seems to be central to human nature. This is the conclusion that research psychologist came Ronal Siegel came to in his book *Intoxication: The Universal Drive for Mind-Altering Substances* (Siegel, 1989). Siegel also showed that this drive extends to other species of mammals.

A government should have the interest of its citizen's health in mind and promote a healthy lifestyle. However, the promotion of that healthy lifestyle should not include violating an individual's right to autonomy. Freedom is not just about letting individual make good choices, but allowing them to also make poor health decisions so long as those decisions do not pose harm to others.

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