

# Republic act 9211: the smoking ban

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



I wasn't aware till recently that a smoking ban was being enforced not only in Makati (as everyone generally knows), but nationwide. The Republic Act 9211, also known as the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003, was signed into law last June 2003 to be in sync with the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The purpose of this act is to protect citizens from the hazards of tobacco smoke, to regulate all tobacco advertisements and sponsorship, to promote a healthful environment, and to assist Filipino tobacco farmers in cultivating alternative agricultural crops to prevent economic dislocation.

The Republic Act of 9211 is an excellent law because it doesn't strip the citizens, smokers or non-smokers alike, from their own perspective rights. In section 5 of this act, the bill states that smoking is prohibited in all public places. This is good because it protects non-smokers from second hand smoking, which is known to cause lung cancer and is very hazardous for the health. This way the health of the non-smoker isn't affected in any way.

The public places where they implement this law are pretty appropriate too like in hospitals/clinics/ health centers /nursing homes because it prevents sick people to get even sicker; in restaurants and conference halls because it allows people to have room to breathe in and not die from smoke suffocation; in centers of youth activity like schools because it helps children develop strong and healthy lungs. However, there are smokers who complain about this smoking ban being harsh and that strips their right to smoke.

After all, it is their own body that would be affected anyway. The thing is, their right isn't being stripped at all. The government isn't banning them

from smoking at all. In section 6 of the bill, it states that all enclosed places that are open to the general public, the owner or administrator of such places should establish smoking areas. This means that smokers can still smoke whenever they want but only at specific places so that they won't affect the health of others. Smokers have been treated for so long as the minority.

We can't even complain to smokers in the same table or in the same room because we think that that is rude - when in truth, it's the smoker who is discourteous and inconsiderate. This act teaches smokers to be more responsible of their actions and be more considerate of others. It is also written that it is unlawful for minors to purchase cigarettes and for cigarettes to be sold to them (found in section 9). This point doesn't need much explaining. We all know that persons under the age of 18 shouldn't smoke.

Since their lungs are still developing, if they smoke, their lungs will grow weaker and it would be difficult for them to breathe. Moreover, studies show that people who start smoking under the age of 18 are more likely to get addicted to smoking and it is harder for them to stop. Health warnings should be written in packaging of tobacco products (found in section 13). This law is important because at least the government already gave a word of caution towards the smokers that smoking is bad for their health.

This allows the smoker to reflect on their actions and consider the feelings of his family and friends regarding his harmful habit. If these smokers don't listen and continue, then that is their own problem already. If anything happens to them, they can't blame anyone but themselves. Right now the

Ateneo de Manila University are destroying all smoket or smoking areas located around campus. Without these smokets, there won't be a place for smokers to take a huff. I think that the school implemented such a rule in order to prevent students from smoking and start living healthy.

However, I think that this action will result to a completely different outcome. Without a place to smoke, the students and teachers would become more agitated and irritated. They won't be able to concentrate in class and this would disrupt their process of learning. Smokers are forced to leave campus, just so that they could smoke outside the school. If this happens, there is a high possibility that smokers will come late for class or even cut the entire period. Smoking was never a problem for the school at the first place.

Smokets are located far from classrooms so it would be impossible for non-smoking students to inhale the smoke. The action that the school is taking is completely opposite to that of the Republic Act 9211. Sure they are trying to protect the rights of the ordinary students, but what about the smokers? Their right is smoked is being stripped off and I wouldn't be surprised if a movement that goes against this newly implemented law starts. The implementation of smoking bans has been weak. There are still a lot of places that are not strict in implementation. Nothing much is heard in the tri-media since 2003.

And if you go around Manila and the provinces, you would still see a lot people smoking in the prohibited places mentioned. Cities and municipalities that have initiated or intensified anti-smoking campaigns are usually met with strong opposition from the business and the tourism sectors. These

sectors say that the ban can drive away tourists and their customers and decrease their income. The Republic Act 9211 may be an excellent law but without serious political will and dedication to have this law properly followed and enforced, it will remain excellent in paper only.