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## State smoking ban clears House

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SPRINGFIELD — On the strength of suburban votes, Illinois lawmakers approved a statewide smoking ban Tuesday, potentially snuffing out cigarette use in bars, restaurants, casinos, horse tracks and nearly every other public place.

The measure passed the House 73-42. Only four of the 31 lawmakers from the area voted against it.

"This is a public health issue, not a question of whether or not people should smoke," said state Rep. Carolyn Krause, a Mount Prospect Republican and a co-sponsor of the plan. "Second-hand smoke is a danger. There's no doubt about it. There's no hesitancy. The evidence is there. Public health ... prevailed today."

Experts say second-hand smoke kills nearly 2,900 people each year. They say restrictions could save the lives of people exposed to cigarette smoke, especially those working in smoky establishments.

Smoking bans have permeated statehouse debates for nearly two decades. Prohibition proponents gained a victory two years ago when lawmakers approved a plan allowing local communities to go smoke-free if they choose.

A number of suburban municipalities did just that, including Naperville and Arlington Heights. A patchwork of new smoking restrictions followed across the state. Some business owners said it gave bars and restaurants in nearby, smoker-friendly communities a competitive advantage.

Although anti-smoking activists say a statewide plan would level the economic playing field, state Rep. JoAnn Osmond said that's not the case, especially for border towns.

"Smokers will just go up a mile and enter Wisconsin to spend their money," the Antioch Republican said. "I'm trying to keep business in Illinois. This is a deterrent."

State Rep. Dave Winters, a Shirland Republican, isn't a smoker and hates the smell of cigarettes. But he argued such opinions don't give lawmakers the right to slap people on the wrist for personal decisions.

"That doesn't mean we should trample on the rights of the minority who choose to pollute their own lungs," Winters said. "It's their decision."

But supporters said the perceived rights of smokers shouldn't trump the health of others.

"Everyone has the right to smoke, but your rights stop where my rights begin," said state Rep. Karen Yarbrough, a Chicago Democrat who sponsored the ban.

In 2001, Illinois taxpayers spent nearly \$700 million on smoking-related costs, according to

the Illinois Department of Public Health. Supporters say a smoking ban will save the state money by reducing smoking-related illnesses.

At the same time, the state is expected to lose up to \$60 million per year in cigarette tax revenue from an anticipated smoking decline.

Having won lawmakers' support, the smoking ban now lies in the hands of Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

"It sure sounds to me like that would be something that I would enthusiastically sign, and I would be shocked if there was something in that bill that ... would keep me from signing it," he said.

If approved, Illinois would become the 19th state to go smoke-free. The ban would start Jan. 1.

#### **Five things to know about the proposed state smoking ban**

1. It would take effect Jan. 1, 2008.
2. The anticipated reduction in smoking is likely to cost the state \$60 million in lost cigarette tax dollars.
3. The state plan trumps any local smoking bans:
  - Naperville wouldn't have to make any changes since its plan mirrors the state's.
  - In Arlington Heights, the Arlington Park horse track no longer would be exempt.
  - Chicago's smoking ban would take effect six months sooner.
4. Smokers going outside to light up would have to move 15 feet away from entrances.
5. State prison inmates could smoke only when outside in the prison yard.

Source: SB500, American Lung Association of Illinois.

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