

Smoke-Free Workplace Laws Don't Hurt Business

Whenever legislation is proposed to protect workers and patrons from second-hand smoke in indoor places open to the public—such as restaurants, bars, and offices—concerns are raised about possible harm to the restaurant, bar, and tourism industries. In fact, smoke-free workplace laws have had either a neutral or positive effect on business.

In every locality in the U.S. that has restricted or prohibited smoking in public places—from Los Angeles to El Paso—research by government agencies, academic institutions, and independent survey firms has shown no negative economic impact. Objective evidence such as comparing restaurant sales receipts before and after smoking bans, the number of restaurants opening and closing, restaurant employment, tourism, and market share data all document that the great majority of patrons—tourists and local residents alike—prefer smoke-free environments.

Even the tobacco industry admits that smoke-free workplace laws don't hurt business: *"...the economic arguments often used by the industry to scare off smoking ban activity were no longer working.... These arguments simply had no credibility with the public, which isn't surprising when you consider that our dire predictions in the past rarely came true."* —Internal document, Philip Morris, 1994.

New York City's current smoke-free workplace law doesn't hurt business.

When smoking in restaurants of more than 35 seats was limited to the restaurant's bar area in 1995 in New York City, it did not prevent the city from experiencing an unprecedented boom in its restaurant, bar, and hotel business:

- ♦ Taxable sales from all eating, drinking, and hotel establishments in New York City increased at a rate higher than the rest of the state, which generally did not have restrictions on smoking, and
- ♦ Restaurant employment increased by 18%, compared to only a 5% rise outside the metropolitan area.

That shouldn't be surprising in a city like New York, where 8 out of 10 adults do not smoke, and an overwhelming majority have consistently reported in surveys that they do not like to breathe smoke from other people's cigarettes. Market research shows that, by a rate of 2 to 1, New Yorkers would eat out *more* often if they could eat in a smoke-free environment.

California's comprehensive smoke-free workplace law hasn't hurt business, including restaurants and bars.

In 1998, all of California's restaurants and bars went smoke-free. According to the California Board of Equalization, sales at places selling beer, wine, and liquor increased *every quarter* in 1998, 1999 and into 2000 (the last period for which data are available). What's more, sales increases at these establishments outpaced - by nearly 8% - increases at all other types of retail outlets.

(over)



WARNING: You don't have to smoke to die from it. Second-hand smoke kills.

Smoke-free workplace legislation has become increasingly popular. While 65% of bar patrons in California “strongly” or “somewhat” approved of the law in 1998, almost three-quarters (73%) felt that way by 2000. Also by 2000, 87% of bar patrons in California reported they were “as likely” or “more likely” to visit bars since they had become smoke-free.

Smoke-free workplace laws don't hurt tourism.

Contrary to popular belief, Europeans and other foreign nationals have lower per capita tobacco consumption rates than Americans. Market share analyses of international tourism in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Miami indicate that smoke-free workplace policies did not change travelers' choice of destination. In fact, after California enacted smoke-free workplace laws in restaurants and bars, tourism revenues and employment continued to grow.

Smoke-free workplace laws can help employers cut business costs.

Businesses with smoke-free policies experience less absenteeism when non-smoking employees are no longer exposed to second-hand smoke, which can trigger asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses. Health insurance costs may decrease. Employers also see lower housekeeping and maintenance costs because they no longer need to clean ashtrays, sweep up cigarette butts, replace burnt carpeting, or clean fabrics and other materials nearly as often. And employers with smoke-free policies may also see lower liability insurance costs because of fewer smoking-related fires.

Many types of businesses that had long permitted smoking before prohibiting it have enjoyed growth and prosperity. It was not so many years ago that smoking was permitted in movie theatres in New York City, on Metro North and Long Island Railroad trains, and on all airplane flights. Yet none of these businesses lost customers when they prohibited smoking.