

A Conservative Estimate

RICK HAMADA



Our Hypocritical Smoking Ban

The state of Hawaii is hypocritical in enacting a ban on smoking while collecting millions of dollars of tobacco taxes each year.

If the state and the legislative supporters of the smoking ban were to be true to their claims and beliefs, they would spearhead the effort to render tobacco illegal. Tobacco would be categorized as contraband just like marijuana, ice and cocaine. If there is not a genuine effort to criminalize tobacco products, then the state is complicit in the injuries and deaths associated with smoking.

If the state does not make the production, distribution, sale and consumption of tobacco illegal, then clearly the product has the tacit approval of government. Thus, tobacco is clearly a legal product and individuals who desire its use should be able to enjoy it. If there is a business that desires to attract and service a clientele which smokes, it should have the choice to do so without encumbrance from government. If an employee chooses to work in an environment of smokers, that is their choice. Conversely, if an employee finds smoke offensive, they have a choice to pursue employment elsewhere.

State Rep. Colleen Meyer, R-Kaaawa, has drafted and introduced House Bill 792, which seeks to exempt bars, nightclubs and restaurants from the complete ban on smoking. A provision would be adequate signage informing the public that smoking is allowed within. If this were the case, the business owner can choose whether or not to allow smoking in his establishment, the employee can choose whether to work or not in the smoke-friendly environment, and customers can choose whether or not to frequent the bar, nightclub or restaurant. We all have choices to make, and the repeal of the smoking ban will ensure our right to choose.

All legal products have some degree of regulation. Tobacco is no exception. But the ban of any product or activity is the most draconian position government can take. The studies on second-hand smoke, the basis of any smoking ban, is the justification for the purported threat against non-smokers. It is clear there are no absolute statements of irrefutable fact that can be cited on either side of the argument.

So how did we get subjected to the most severe anti-smoking laws in the nation? Just look at the majority of members comprising your state Legislature and the governor's office. This ban is an expression of governance. Although I believe the ban is bad policy, it went through the legislative process and our representative democracy has spoken.

If you agree with the ban, you must be thrilled. If you disagree with the ban, you have the same legislative process available to effect the changes you desire. But you must become immersed in the topic and vigilant in your participation. If not, then this ban will stand and you will be required to sneak around and risk becoming a scofflaw.

The bottom line is that H.B. 792 allows for choice among business owners and their customers. According to Meyer, more than 4,000 have signed a petition asking the governor and the Legislature for a repeal of the smoking ban.

I hope you will join this battle for individual choice. If not, then work equally as hard to make tobacco illegal. This two-faced position by the state cannot continue.

rickhamada@hawaii.rr.com

We Welcome and Encourage Common Sense Thinking, Both in the Media, and in the Legislature!

Last year alone in Hawaii

88 MILLION DOLLARS

In Tobacco Tax

was poured into the coffers of the State by just

200,000 smokers (over ONE TENTH of the State Surplus).

Then you screw us with a Total Ban? Talk about biting the hand that feeds you.

But, we can bite back...it's called...Elections.

Hawaii Bar Owners Association
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Hawaii Smokers Alliance
Jolyn Tenn—jtenn10@aol.com
Americans For Freedom Of Choice
Kawika Crowley—kawikc@aol.com

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