

More college campuses ban smoking

By Matthew Daneman, USA TODAY 09-09-2012

The days of lighting up a smoke are rapidly coming to an end at college campuses across the USA.

The University of Oklahoma, the University of Oregon and Montana State University are among those which have enacted campuswide bans this year. The University of California system announced in January that by 2014 all of its campuses would ban use or sale of cigarettes and chewing tobacco.

On Wednesday, Howard Koh, U.S. assistant secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services, will be on the University of Michigan campus to announce a White House-backed nationwide push to get campuses everywhere to enact tobacco-free policies.

Such bans are "destined to be universal," says Clifford Douglas, an adviser on tobacco-control policy for Koh and director of the Tobacco Research Network at the University of Michigan, which enacted a campuswide smoking ban in 2011.

According to advocacy group Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, there were 774 college campuses around the USA that had banned smoking as of July 1, including 562 that had banned tobacco use altogether. That's up from 131 campuses in 2008. And, Executive Director Cynthia Hallett says, "I think we're undercounting."

Smoking indoors at college campuses has been largely forbidden since the 1970s, leading to common problems of smokers gathering at building entrances, says Ty Patterson, founder/executive director of the National Center for Tobacco Policy, a consulting firm that helps organizations set up their own tobacco-use rules.

Altria Group, the parent company for Philip Morris USA, maker of Marlboro cigarettes, pointed to a position statement that says although smoking should be prohibited from areas such as elevators and schools, "complete bans go too far." Tobacco-use policies do meet resistance.

Jenny Haubenreiser, director of health promotion at Montana State University and president of the American College Health Association, says the opposition the university faced when discussing the ban was "quite fierce."

"In Montana, spit tobacco is part of the culture," she says. "I've been called some interesting names. Fascist. But overwhelmingly, people have been so grateful and positive. Every parent we talked to said 'This is great.' "

Most of the pushback was from university staff and faculty, says Kiah Abbey, president of the Associated Students of Montana State University .

"With our generation, (smoking bans are) almost a given," Abbey, 21, says. "We never had the opportunity to smoke in a building. We never really had the opportunity to smoke on an airplane. Few of us smoke in our homes. (The prohibition) seems like a natural progression of the community outlook on tobacco use."

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