

# Statewide bans boost smoke-free campus momentum

**Ally Mutnick, USA TODAY Collegiate Correspondent** 7:07 p.m. EDT July 9, 2013

*Lighting up on campus is becoming increasingly difficult as more colleges and universities completely ban smoking.*

College smokers are finding themselves increasingly out of luck, as more schools across the USA ban smoking and use of other tobacco products from campus grounds.

There are about 1,180 schools with 100% smoking bans, according to the advocacy group Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights (ANR). Of these, about 800 campuses ban all forms of tobacco.

Originally starting on the community college level, the smoke-free trend is now growing larger.

In recent years, more university systems and even state governments are considering and passing bans affecting multiple campuses at once, said Liz Williams, project manager for ANR.

"With the college campuses, states are recognizing the fact that this is a good way to encourage people to have healthier tobacco-free lifestyles," she said.

In June, the Louisiana legislature passed a bill requiring the about 40 public post-secondary institutions to implement smoke-free policies, becoming the fourth state to enact some form of statewide campus ban.

New York, North Carolina, Illinois and New Jersey are or were considering laws prohibiting smoking or tobacco in recent legislative sessions, Williams said.

In 2012, Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin signed an executive order making all state-owned property, including public colleges, tobacco-free.

Dontae Cooper, a University of Oklahoma junior, said he supports the ban. Working at an emergency room, Cooper sees countless patients suffering from complications from smoking.

Many of these smokers started the habit in college or high school, he said.

The University of Oklahoma passed a tobacco ban in 2012 before the statewide executive order took effect. Cooper said he has seen a difference.

"Since then, honestly, if I think about it I really haven't had any problems with inhaling smoke," he said. "I remember when I first came on campus as a freshman, there were smokers everywhere."

Iowa passed a similar law banning smoking on public and private universities in 2008. Arkansas banned smoking in state-sponsored learning institutions in 2009.

University systems have also increased bans in recent years. This year, ANR added five multiple-campus schools — with 21 campuses total — to its list of schools that ban smoking or tobacco.

The number of campuses enacting bans has been rapidly increasing. In early 2007, there were about 140 smoke-free campuses. By July 1, 2012, that number rose to about 770, according to the advocacy group.

But smoking bans are not popular with all students.

University of Massachusetts-Amherst's tobacco-free policy began July 1. Junior Derek Fisher said he doesn't know anyone who likes the school's decision.

"If you partake in tobacco products, it's a personal choice," Fisher said. "It's unhealthy, but it's still a personal choice."

Fisher said it is annoying that the university bans all forms of tobacco, even those that do not cause secondhand smoke, like chewing tobacco or [electronic cigarettes](#).

Electronic cigarettes are not currently regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. Many schools are including the products in their bans until health risks associated with them are known, Williams said.

The number of states considering blanket bans on smoking is a testament to the increasing awareness of the harms of tobacco, said Clifford Douglas, director of the Tobacco Research Network at the University of Michigan.

"This is a sign of the change of times that the tobacco industry and its allies can no longer block public policy changes the way the industry once did," Douglas said.

For example, North Carolina, a prominent tobacco-growing state, is considering a statewide tobacco ban for community colleges in its legislature.

Louisiana's bill passed quickly and with surprisingly little opposition from both houses, said Tonia Moore, associate director of the Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living.

Louisiana was ranked 49th in 2012 state health rankings by the United Health Foundation. Moore attributes the bill's support to the legislators' desire to see healthier habits for college-age students.

But Douglas admits the statewide university bans can be more complicated. When decisions are made on a state level, the individual campus has not always reviewed smoke-free policies as a community, he said.

This year, the Maine legislature passed legislation creating smoke-free campuses, but Gov. Paul LePage vetoed the bill, saying that public universities could make their own decisions regarding tobacco.

The Louisiana law has no implementation guidelines for individual campuses. The ANR

has not yet deemed it a 100% smoke-free state because the law's terminology was too vague.

Schools should be the ones to enact their smoking policies, said Wayne Chen, a Rutgers University senior.

Chen said smoking can be therapeutic to students, and he hopes New Jersey does not pass a statewide campus smoking ban.

"It's nice once in a while just to know that I'm going to crank out two hours of studying and then have a cigarette (and) coffee break," he said.

*Ally Mutnick is a summer 2013 Collegiate Correspondent.*

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/07/09/smoking-ban-college-campuses/2504093/>