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Gov. Christie's smoking ban veto fails to protect what matters: Editorial

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This is New Jersey, the most densely populated state in the union, and as such the one with the most people around whom you would prefer not to breathe.

Parks and beaches could provide such a respite, but somehow Gov. Christie has decided that open air is a frivolous matter for other administrators, while he protects the Equitable Carcinogenic Distribution Policy popularized by the tobacco industry, the same one that smokers rely on to maintain whatever social acceptance they have left.

The governor has **vetoed the bill that would ban smoking in parks and beaches**, even though the vast majority of lawmakers believe that the right to breath clean air supersedes the right of a small minority to share thousands of chemicals such as formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide and arsenic with anyone who happens to be sitting downwind.

In towns where second-hand smoke, litter, water pollution and fire damage are an issue, the state should step in to protect the public.

Indeed, only a few states have taken to banning smoking in parks (Oregon) and beaches (Hawaii), but the vast majority of New Jerseyans live in places that more resemble New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia – three cities that have adopted bans, because they know the danger of second-hand smoke is no longer under debate. Consider the jaw-dropping estimate from the Center for Disease Control: The CDC estimates that more than 2.5 million Americans have died from exposure to second-hand smoke since 1964.

Gov. Christie, however, believes this should be regulated on a municipal level – 240 towns and a dozen counties have such ordinances for parks, and 14 towns have banned smoking on their beaches – but this was his opportunity to protect and promote public health, not bow to the tobacco companies that poured \$130,000 into the Republican Governors Association's bank account since a certain New Jersey governor became its chairman.

The legislature recognized the need for S1772/A1080: The bill passed by a 64-8 vote in the Assembly and a 30-3 landslide in the Senate. But given the Republicans' reluctance to veto anything, even something that could help save lives, the public will, as usual, will be rendered mute. Zipping your mouth while holding your nose is something we'll all have to get used to.

http://www.nj.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/09/smoking_ban_veto_is_gov_christies_latest_accountability_dodge_editorial.html