

# The Bergen Record: Less smoke

EDITORIAL BOARD    SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2014, 1:21 AM

FRANKLIN LAKES has joined more than 30 Bergen County municipalities in banning smoking in public parks and recreational facilities. This is something to celebrate, but bringing that municipal number up to 70 in Bergen County would be even better news.

Last week, the Borough Council voted unanimously to adopt an ordinance that prohibits smoking in parks and recreational buildings, including restricting the use of electronic cigarettes. Cigarette use remains on the decline, but these new e-cigarettes have gained popularity among young people. The long-term effects of smoking these devices are unknown. Curbing e-cigarette use in public places is prudent.

We recognize that smokers have rights as well. Many citizens, even non-smokers, view these expanded anti-smoking ordinances – more than 250 municipalities in New Jersey have similar bans – as infringements on constitutional rights. But it would be hard to find the right to smoke in public places in the Constitution. Citizens can still light up inside their cars while driving through public places. But preventing smokers from sending their secondhand smoke into the lungs of others protects the rights of non-smokers to remain smoke-free.

The nation has come a long way since the late-U.S. Sen. Frank Lautenberg led the charge to ban smoking on commercial airplanes. Today, more is known about the dangerous effects of smoking and of inhaling secondhand smoke. Yet political leaders still wade carefully into this debate, carving out exceptions when political forces overpower smart public health policy – smoking in casinos, for example.

**This year, Governor Christie vetoed a bill that would have banned smoking in all public parks and severely limited smoking at public beaches. Christie said the ban was a "one-size-fits-all" response by the Legislature. We do not agree. But if the governor has left it to municipalities to fix, then Franklin Lakes did what more municipalities in New Jersey should do as well.**

And its ordinance has teeth – a \$250 fine for a first offense, \$500 for a second and \$1,000 for each subsequent offense. If people want to smoke in their homes and cars, they can do that. But no one should have to be subjected to inhaling that smoke in public places.

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