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City of Sulphur bans smoking in bars & casinos

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SULPHUR, LA (KPLC) - Smokers will soon have fewer places to light up in the City of Sulphur.

"First of all -- people of Sulphur -- you don't have a right to smoke. So by our inaction we have allowed ourselves to be controlled," said Randy Hebert, Sulphur resident.

Smoking in bars and casinos will no longer be allowed. The Sulphur City Council amended its "Smoke Free Air Ordinance" Monday night. The changes include e-cigarettes and vaping.

Councilman Randy Favre explained e-cigarettes are not regulated and are currently classified by the CDC as a tobacco product. Favre added despite countless studies, not one of them conclusively outlines the potential health risks.

Supporters of the change said it's a step in the right direction to ensure a safe working environment for everyone.

"All of the research -- all of the studies -- I have seen, and it's been a bunch... shows that cancer is caused by cigarettes and by cigarette smoke," said Dr. Jason Fuqua, physician.

Grammy Award winning musician Chubby Carrier said he's seen one too many friends on the nightclub scene die from secondhand smoke.

"Every year we are losing at least one good musician to secondhand smoke. We're also seeing barmaids, bar owners die. So I'm just voicing my opinion while I have a voice.

I'm afraid myself -- working in these environments every day," said Carrier.

Other cities around the state have passed similar laws, including Alexandria. Alexandria City Councilman Roosevelt Johnson told Sulphur city officials they too had a lot of opposition from businesses when they passed the law several years ago. However, Johnson said businesses continue to thrive years later.

"As of this day, I just want to let you know one thing - the bingo halls didn't go out of business, the bars didn't go out of business. We have a healthy community and they are moving forward and progressing," said Johnson.

Sulphur City Council members unanimously passed the amendment to the ordinance.

"We have to worry about the health of our workers and that includes in bars and casinos... and that's the sole purpose of this ordinance. We want to make sure nobody ever has to make that choice between their health and their job," said Favre.

The law states smokers must be 25 feet away from the main entrance of the building and five feet away from the secondary entrance. The law also applies to parks where children play.

The law goes into effect in 30 days. There will be a 60 day grace period to give businesses enough time to apply for variances. Meanwhile, all calls regarding the smoking ordinance are being directed to the Sulphur Police Department.

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