

Asbury Park Press

Christie butting heads with GOPers on beach smoking ban

Bill A-893 extends to parks and beaches provisions of the “New Jersey Smoke Free Air Act” prohibiting smoking in indoor public places and workplaces.

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@BobJordanAPP 2:11 p.m. EST February 22, 2016

TRENTON – New Jersey Republican lawmakers appear headed to a loyalty test with GOP Gov. Chris Christie over a bill on a statewide ban of smoking at public beaches and parks.

Christie vetoed the same legislation in 2014 but members on an Assembly panel from both parties unanimously advanced a reintroduced bill Monday.

Jeff Tittel of the New Jersey Sierra Club at the public hearing said second-hand smoke and litter are concerns.

“Our volunteers last year picked up over 7,000 cigarette butts just on the beaches in Ocean County,” Tittel said.

[The 2014 bill had wide support.](#) It passed 63-8-5 in the Assembly. No one voted against it in the Senate.

The number of supporters in each house would have been enough to override a veto, [but Republican lawmakers have typically been unwilling to vote to override Christie's rejection of bills](#), and Democrats didn't attempt a reversal.

[Bill A-893 extends to parks and beaches provisions of the “New Jersey Smoke Free Air Act”](#) prohibiting smoking in indoor public places and workplaces. The Senate is expected to introduce a counterpart measure.

The ban would not apply to a golf course, or to an area of a municipal or county beach, not to exceed 15 percent of the total area of the beach, which is designated by the municipality or county by ordinance or resolution as a smoking area.

The proposed law is designed to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, litter and fire risks. Violators would be fined at least \$250 for a first offense, increasing to up to \$1,000 for repeated violations.

[Over half of the state's towns \(308 of them, according to the Global Advisors Smokefree Policy advocacy group\) have laws restricting smoking in parks or beaches.](#)

Christie in his veto two years ago punted to local leaders, saying, [“Too often, policy-makers at more centralized levels of government encroach into areas of public policy previously reserved for more localized governing bodies.”](#)

Bill sponsor Valerie Vainieri Huttel, a Democrat from Bergen County, said, “Unfortunately we did a get a veto last time around. When we talk about the harmful effects of smoking and second-hand smoke, we're also talking about keeping our pristine beaches and parks clean and litter-free.”

<http://www.app.com/story/news/politics/new-jersey/chris-christie/2016/02/22/christie-beach-smoking-ban/80759954/>