

Yahoo! Sports

Smokeless tobacco could be banned at Yankee Stadium and Citi Field

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February 5, 2016 7:26 PM

[Big League Stew](#)

In October, California Gov. [Jerry Brown](#) took a huge step in the battle to eliminate smokeless tobacco from Major League Baseball by [signing a bill that bans its use in each of the state's five major-league ballparks](#).

That came on the heels of the Boston City Council voting unanimously to ban smokeless tobacco and other tobacco products at all professional and amateur sports venues, which included Fenway Park.

Now New York seems prepared to follow suit after a similar bill was introduced Friday that would ultimately ban smokeless tobacco from public venues.

[According to the New York Times](#), [Corey Johnson](#), a New York City Council member, prepared the bill and included language that aimed to ban smokeless tobacco from public areas in each of New York's five boroughs. That would include Yankee Stadium and Citi Field, meaning if the bill is passed smokeless tobacco would be banned at eight of MLB's 30 stadiums.

““If New York passes this bill, and I think it will, it moves us dramatically closer to the day when smokeless tobacco is prohibited in all major league cities,” said Matthew Myers, the president of Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.”

Both the Yankees and the Mets have told Johnson that they would support the bill, and the councilman is confident that the full Council will support the legislation. New York has been at the forefront of several health initiatives, including smoking bans, various posting requirements for

food establishments and a failed attempt to ban big sodas.

In the previous three cities to pass similar legislation — San Francisco, Los Angeles and Boston — the bills all were approved unanimously. Mr. Johnson said he hoped to have his bill quickly approved and signed by Mayor Bill de Blasio so it could be in effect by opening day in early April. Mr. Johnson, the chairman of the Council's Committee on Health, said he intends to hold a hearing on the bill by the end of February.

If passed, those who violate the law will be ejected from the stadium premises. Baseball has made its own effort to curb tobacco use in the past, even banning it from the minor-league level all together. It remains legal in MLB, although players are told it can't be used while cameras are present. If it is visible, warnings and fines are to be handed out, though there's always concern about how seriously those rules are followed and ultimately enforced.

The movement to ban tobacco outright gained new momentum following the death of Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn in 2014. Gwynn battled cancer of the salivary glands, which many attributed to his prolonged use of chewing tobacco, or what's referred to as "dipping" by lodging it between the lip and the gum.

With proposed bills such as this one from Councilman Johnson in New York and the bill proposed by Tony Thurmond, a state assembly member in California, which was later approved by Gov. Brown, the league and the player's union should find it a little easier to move forward with a rule that encompasses MLB.

With that in mind, there will always be those who will argue the merits of regulating the otherwise legal behavior of consenting adults. But there is and should be a bigger focus on athletes because of the influence they can have on the kids who look up to them. Every step that can be taken to distance or flat out remove tobacco from the game and the subconscious of those who watch is a step worth taking.

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