
Gov. Christie, the rest of us don't want to inhale | Editorial



By **Times of Trenton Editorial Board**

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As the public woke up to the horrors of tobacco, more and more venues began declaring no-smoking zones to keep our lungs safe.

Airplanes, hospitals, restaurants, government buildings – all are places we don't have to inhale noxious fumes or cast our gaze on discarded butts and used matches.

No-smoking ordinances already exist in almost 300 of the state's municipalities.

If that seems harsh, consider the price society annually pays in terms of health costs, environmental clean-up and the risks of fires set by the careless disposal of an ignited cigarette.



Christie agrees to smoking ban in state parks, beaches

"Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in this country, and everyone is well aware of the dangers of second-hand smoke in this day and age," said state Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttie (D-Bergen).

The lawmaker, a key proponent of anti-smoking bans, notes that polls show **Garden State residents are supportive** of expanding such policies.

Last summer, the state came heart-breakingly close to adopting what would have been the most comprehensive anti-smoking law in the country.

But Gov. Chris Christie **refused to sign on to a ban** at all public beaches parks and outdoor sites, claiming the state should not dictate how local communities use their public spaces. Instead, he issued a conditional veto while agreeing to prohibit cigarette use on properties owned by the state.

Health advocates and environmental groups applauded the bipartisan bill, **NJSpotlight reported in July**. According to the American Lung Association, the move would have made New Jersey the only state to expend such a ban to all municipal, county and state properties.

Previous administrations have been bolder in standing up to the demands of Big Tobacco. The state barred smoking in indoor public places a decade ago, and raised the age at which residents can buy cigarettes from 18 to 19 – both laudable actions.

In Mercer County, Ewing, **Princeton**, **Trenton** and West Windsor have opted for the well-being its residents over the bottom line of the tobacco magnates. Under Trenton's policy, adopted in July 2015, violators are subject to fines of up to \$100 for first offenses up to \$200 for second offenses an up to \$500 after that.

Now, add Hightstown to the list of **New Jersey municipalities whose parks are now off-limits** to smokers. Violators face a \$25 fine, enough to make anyone think twice about lighting up.

The devastation smoking causes has been documented for half a century. These local leaders, including those representing the Capital City, show they understand these facts. Now we're ready for a statewide leader with vision to put more muscle into the fight.

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