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## In Illinois, a Ban Sends Smokers Into the Cold

By [MONICA DAVEY](#)

CHICAGO — A strict ban on [smoking](#) went into effect in [Illinois](#) on Tuesday, sending clusters of bundled smokers here out into frigid temperatures and the thick pile of snow that also arrived with the new year.

The restrictions, which ban smoking inside bars, restaurants, bowling alleys, pool halls, casinos and in nearly every other public place and workplace, called on business owners to remove all ashtrays, post “no smoking” signs and enforce the new rules.

“People weren’t happy about it,” Tito Chacon, a waiter at the Billy Goat Tavern, a Chicago institution, said on Tuesday. “But this is the law now.”

While there were complaints, the law went into effect with relatively little fanfare. In recent years, more than 20 other states have adopted similar restrictions on smoking, experts said. Scores of cities and counties have passed their own limits, as have officials in other countries, including [France](#), where a ban also went into effect on Jan. 1.

Somewhere along the way, antismoking advocates said, such laws have begun to draw less debate.

“The country has really become quite aware of the dangers of smoking over the past five years,” said Kevin B. Tynan, an official with the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago. “We’ve had a thorough discussion. And even smokers recognize the real dangers.”

Here, health advocacy groups are providing quit-smoking help, including squeeze balls to relieve [stress](#). The Respiratory Health Association offered 25-cent bounties for unwanted ashtrays; 350 had been collected by Tuesday.

Advocates of strict bans said they had been shown to help reduce smoking and had not, generally, resulted in slowdowns for businesses, as some had feared.

But the operators of Illinois’s nine casinos are unconvinced. They predict a 20 percent decrease in business will follow the law, said Tom Swoik, the executive director of the Illinois Casino Gaming Association. There is a high correlation, he said, between people who go to casinos and people who smoke; some Illinois operators say as much as 70 percent of their customers smoke.

Several casinos here, too, are not far from states where smoking bans have not been imposed. Unhappy smokers could cross state lines, the operators say.

“We’re hoping that after the legislature sees the impact of this, they’ll reconsider an exception,” Mr. Swoik said. For now, he said, many casinos have built outside shelters — akin to partly enclosed bus stops — where smokers can take breaks.

The Illinois ban, passed by the legislature, creates some consistency in what had become a patchwork of regulations adopted by municipalities around the state, including Chicago.

“We can all collectively take a breath of fresh air as this long-awaited law finally takes hold,” Gov. [Rod R. Blagojevich](#) said in a statement released Tuesday. More than 16,000 people in Illinois die each year from smoking-related illnesses, he said.

For violations, smokers can be fined up to \$250, the governor’s office said. Businesses may be fined \$250, more for multiple violations.

Chicago officials said the departments of public health and business affairs and licensing would enforce the ban during regular inspections. Residents may also report complaints.

Smoking is still allowed in homes, some hotel rooms and retail tobacco stores.

That exemption has led the owners of Mario’s Taco House in the Humboldt Park neighborhood to transform itself into a tobacco shop. They had long sold cigars here but are adding specialty [cigarettes](#) and tobacco — and dropping the tacos, said Mario Martinez, whose family owns the renamed store, Caganchos.

“We realized people still want somewhere to go for this,” he said.

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